

EIGHT BELLS

EDWARD CHAMPE CARTER



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. EIGHT BELLS

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(Revised Edition)

BY

EDWARD CHAMPE CARTER

AUTHOR OF "THE LONE SCOUT,"

"A MARINE, SIR!" ETC.



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DEDICATED TO H. B. B., JR.

THE "PAT DEAN" OF THIS TALE

In school-boy holidays do you remember
How, when the hours seemed long, the
tales of joy
An older fellow told in warm September
To one brown eyed, enthusiastic boy?

Sea tales of polar snows, where brightly
flashes
The wond'rous Northern Light. And
wrecks galore—
Or some key where the warm Caribbean
crashes;
Some 'Treasure Island' rich in pirate
lore.

You were that youngster full of wide-eyed
wonder,
I was the fellow—Ah, time goes and
comes!
So take this book of mine, pass o'er each
blunder,
Each crudity. Remember, we were chums.

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HOW IT HAPPENED

“ ‘ Ahoy, lone sailor! what of the voyage? ’

‘ I’ve neither chart nor bearings, friend.’

‘ Ahoy, lone sailor! what of the voyage? ’

‘ I’ve passed the care o’ caring, friend.’ ”

(—Old Song.)

Three sailor men, their clothes showed that, sat in a big basement room under the shop of Liang Fu & Son, Importers from the Orient, in a side street just off one of New York’s most swirling thoroughfares. One was quite a young man, his body hidden under oily dungarees, the tiny, black felt skull cap of a machinist on his curly, dark brown head, and a smudge of grease across the bridge of his turned up nose. They called him Andy, here in the basement room, where, by-the-way, last names were rarely mentioned. Of the other two, one was only a few years older than the boy in the dungarees (he was eighteen), and the third was in his early fifties. All three were smoking, all three

were drinking, and all three showed a general sort of restlessness as if they had been waiting for a long time for some important event that kept on putting itself off. At last Andy began cursing, with as much gruffness as he could assume, the object of his displeasure being a slim, red headed boy of fifteen, or sixteen, who lay huddled on the cement floor, sobbing.

“That Wes’ kid makes me feel creepy, Alf,” he said a bit apologetically, to the oldest man. “Can’t you make him shut up? What’s makin’ Wes’ bawl, anyhow?”

“Why, you see, Andy,” Alf answered slowly, beginning to pick his words with elaborate care, “Kum-Sin—the Master, I mean—he aint jus’ exactly pleased with Wes’. He aint earnin’ his salt, an’ his boy’s voice is a’breakin’, (an’ we all of us knows how the Master loves music), an—well! Wes’ felled down terrible on this last job, an’—”

“ ‘D’ afternoon, all hands! ”

A boy of fourteen, splendidly husky for his age, with a jolly, mischievous, brown face under a regular mop of straight, brown

hair, more or less pranced into the basement room. His clothes were very nice. His Norfolk jacket, his baggy knickers, the black stockings that hid his round, solid legs, even his shoes were of the very best, though nothing was so new as to appear "dressed up." Altogether, he was a big contrast to the sailormen at the table, and the older boy on the floor.

He was received with real enthusiasm, slapped on his sturdy, plump back, shaken hands with any number of times, and then helped to a cup of very wonderful, Chinese tea, handed him by a skinny, chattering Oriental named Poy.

"Gee, but this is great!" the husky fourteen-year-old grinned, curling up in a big, teakwood armchair, and helping himself from a great, bronze bowl of lychee nuts, whose musty sweetness he seemed to love.

"Any luck, Master Tom?" the oldest sailor, Alf, asked eagerly, pushing a satsuma sugar bowl a bit nearer the youngster's strong, boyishly plump paw.

The boy burst out laughing:

“ Luck? ” he chuckled, a most engagingly open swagger showing at once. “ Luck? Gee *whiz!* The Master says I’ve done *fine*. It was awful lonesome crossin’ from Southampton, though, and *He* had told me not to be too pally with anybody, and to play I was seasick, so—”

A roar of laughter from the three sailors interrupted him.

“ Gosh! think of Master Tom gettin’ seasick!” young Andy shouted. “ Couldn’t do it if you tried, could you, sir? ”—all three men addressed the boy in the baggy knickers with really deep affection, but with a sort of respect, too, as servants might address their master’s son.

“ ‘Course not, Andy,” Tom grinned, “ but they thought I was, on board that Cunarder. And wasn’t I lonesome? You bet I was! But say! Kum-S—*Gosh!* the *Master*, I mean—says I can tell you fellows now, so listen! That millionaire kid was on board, sure ’nough. He an’ his tutor had the swellest suite on the ship. He’s ten years old. The tutor’s ’bout twenty-two—a girl told me that. The girls on board

were pretty silly about that tutor, and he *is* good lookin', all right. And the way they'd pet that ten-year-old, and fuss over him, was fun! He and his tutor, and his mother are sailing for the Isthmus next week; Panama Railroad liner, not the Royal Mail, nor the Hamburg-American—and—Say, Alf! Ever see that P. R. R. liner, the "Colon."

"Yep!"

"What's she like?"

"W—well, she'll do, Master Tom! A tidy ship, I'd say, but groggy."

"Well, you're shippin' on her—before the mast. Did you know?"

"I aint surprised, Master Tom. That millionaire kid'll be on board, eh?"

"Yes. And Alf!" the fourteen-year-old's round, pert face was grave now, "*He* says you're to take the knife along. He sailed 'bout an hour ago on the "Dagmar," and she's to go 'round through the Straits, and then up the coast to you-know-where, though *He'll* leave her at Cristobal, or maybe stop off at Jamaica, and take a Royal Mail the rest of the way. But, anyhow, He

told me not to forget to tell you to take the knife."

"Thought so!" from the old sailor, quite grimly.

A new fit of crying shook the boy on the floor—he had been quiet since Tom's appearance—and he lifted his tousled, red head, and looked at Alf in panic, his freckled face, usually peach blossom as to skin color, now a sickly, grayish white.

"What's the matter with you, Wes'?" Tom asked, his manner to the older boy being somewhat that of a young Crown Prince to a nice enough 'Squire in his royal father's court.

And then the two younger sailors chimed in.

"Yes, what's bitin' you, Wes'?" in considerable indignation, from Andy, and:

"Did the Master lick you, 'fore he sailed, Wes'?" from the next youngest seaman.

"Aw, shut up, Wes', and come on over here and have some tea," Tom coaxed, thoroughly friendly now. "And say! I got a mango Poy gave me jus' now. Have my mango, Wes'?"

Weston Blain—that was Wes' full name—got to his feet, and started over. He had on nothing but a pair of duck sailor pants, for the room was very hot, and his body was quite naked from the waist upward. He started across to the table, and as he did so, lifted one lean, white arm and tried to wipe off some of the tears from his face. The result was magical.

Tom jumped to his legs, his round, saucy face turning white under its smooth coating of healthy tan, the whole boy evidently horrified, and badly scared, too. He upset his chair in his haste, and it fell to the hard floor with a crash, and he vaulted behind it, squaring off truculently, his tough, brown fists doubled up.

“The Cross! Aw, Gee, *fellows!* The Black Cross of Taboga! Don't you come near me, Wes' Blain!” he screamed, his slightly protuberant, young stomach rising and falling in quick, badly frightened pants. “You k—keep away from me, you! I—I got my China boy knife in my knickers here, an' I'll fix you if you come any nearer. *Honest!*” and he whipped out a small,

stiletto-like knife, with a short, double-edged blade, and stood ready to use it, undoubtedly.

The two younger sailors were to the full as excited as Tom, and the three of them more or less crouched together now behind the overturned chair, all with their knives ready in their hands, and all glaring uneasily at poor, half naked Wes', who, more wretched than ever, snuggled his red head in his bare arms and began to sob again, harder than ever. Only old Alf was calm.

" Might just as well show 'em your armpit good, Wes'," he said quietly. " Yes, mates, it's that Black Cross o' Taboga on the kid's skin. I put it there to-day. That's what he's been cryin' for. Didn't bleed one bit, neither. The knife's workin' beautiful. Yep, you're done for, Wes'! Come along out o' here, Master Tom. An' I'm to take the same knife I wrote that there cross on Wes' damp, little armpit with, 'long with me aboard S.S. " Colon," you say, sir? Right it is! So 'long, Wes'. You aint been a bad, little matey for a kid. Hold up, boys! Master Tom's cryin'.

I wouldn't do that, sir. The Master knows what's what, if we don't. I never forgets that. And," with a cold shrug, "the cross's the cross, *always*."

CHAPTER I

“ FOR THE ISLANDS OF THE BLEST ”

“ But spite all modern notions, I’ve found her ‘first and best—

The only certain packet for the islands of the blest.”
(—Rudyard Kipling.)

“ All ashore that’s going ashore! ”

The year was Nineteen-Five, and at this cry from the shouting deck-stewards, the mass of people on the main cabin deck of the Panama Railroad Company’s twin-screw liner “ Colon ” began to divide itself into two crowds, one set made up of voyagers, packed the rails both on the main deck and, though in less numbers, on the promenade deck, while the other, composed of home people, began scurrying for the slanting gangways that led to the pier. The “ Colon ” was one of the typical steamers that run between New York and South America; her black hull showed in striking contrast to the white enamel of her superstructure, the

smooth hardwood of her lower decks and the broad expanse of her promenade deck, shaded by white awnings, blending with the whiteness of her canvas covered life-boats. Above the decks rose her two, huge, black funnels with a wide, white stripe near the top, and over all the two masts of golden Oregon pine lifted themselves rakishly. At the bow hung the red and white flag of the Republic of Panama, with its two stars. From the foremast the company's ensign, white with a black "P." From the mainmast the "blue Peter", and from the slender, gilt tipped staff at the stern floated the Stars and Stripes.

The heat on deck was terrific, and, though it was cooler in the saloon or the smoking room, almost everyone persisted in staying outside. After the last person reached the dock, and the two impudent looking little tugs had brought the "Colon" from her berth out into the North River, the people on board and the people on shore set up the usual handkerchief waving, hat tipping, last message shouting, that is apparently inseparable from the departure of a steamer.

As the big liner swung into the channel, the tugs dropped her and, moving ahead at half speed, with an occasional gruff blast from her whistles, or a shrill scream of warning from her siren as some venture-some ferry-boat crossed her bows, she picked her way for the “Narrows.”

Standing on the promenade deck, just amidships, was a husky, clear skinned young fellow of seventeen. He was well grown for his age, not especially tall, but muscular and solid and thoroughly fit from his broad shouldered, deep chested young body to the soles of his rather big feet. The healthy pink and white of his face showed a few cheerful little freckles, especially over the bridge of his straight nose. His eyes were a dark blue, with a good-natured kindliness in them. The hair on his yellow head was slicked back smoothly from his forehead. The whole boy was rather big, well built, and yet a trifle clumsy, as if he was still too young to be entirely used to his own size. On the back of this yellow head of his he wore a small school cap, such as boys used to call “postage stamps,” a dark blue affair with a

white "N" on the front. His blue serge trousers fitted his big legs loosely, and his soft white outing shirt, with its sleeves rolled up above his elbows, seemed to accentuate his pleasant, frank boyishness. A red four-in-hand tie was knotted under the soft roll of the collar, giving a funny little touch of swagger, and on his feet were a pair of soft, tan shoes with rubber soles and "spring" heels. The whole of the big youngster radiated good health, clean wholesomeness of both body and thoughts; as kind and sweet-tempered a boy as he was tough and husky.

As he stood, with his legs wide apart, looking at the wonderful, ugly skyline of New York, its one redeeming feature the small glimpse of green along the Battery, his eyes danced, and the gravity of his young face altered to a look of absolute rapture.

"Gee!" he said aloud, "It's dandy! Just bet you there isn't another middie in our class on his first vacation—why I bet there *never has been* a second-classman since Annapolis started—that's going to have the bully time I'm going to have on my fur-

lough! Well, I've waited two years for it, and will I make the most of it?—I will! On a bet!”

“Why yes, young man,” said a pleasant, deep voice at his elbow, “I really believe you will.”

The Midshipman glanced up with a blush at the person beside him. He saw a young man of twenty-two or three, fully six feet in height, and broad in proportion. He was particularly good-looking in a blonde way, and possessed a most charming smile, and there was a quiet heartiness to his deep voice that was both friendly and reassuring. His clothes were those of a young fellow with plenty of money, but their perfection was evidently due more to the finesse of his tailors than to any thought that he himself put on them. As he stood, laughing good-naturedly down at the startled young Midshipman, his legs rather wide apart, balancing himself to the roll of the ship, which was beginning to gain motion as she nosed into the more open water, he seemed to the boy to be quite entirely the right sort.

“ I—I didn’t think there was a soul on this side of the ship,” the youngster explained shyly. “ All hands—everybody, I mean—seemed to be on the port side, most of ’em on the lower deck. I don’t generally soliloquize; honest I don’t.”

“ Well, I’m glad you did this once, anyhow,” the man answered, “because it ought to help us to be friends while we’re on board. You see, you’ve more or less introduced yourself already, all but your name, and as we’ve got from six to seven days of this before us, I’d be glad if you’d tell me that. My own name, by the way, is Spenway, Archie Spenway, and I’m just now acting as tutor for a little rich chap, Billy vanZandt.”

“ Oh, he’s the kid whose picture was in the papers such a lot last Autumn, isn’t he, Mr. Spenway? ” the Middie interrupted. “ I remember it said he was only heir to William Sturvisant vanZandt’s money, and it spoke of him as being the richest kid in the United States——”

“ Or anywhere else, for that matter. He’s not William vanZandt’s son, you know. He’s his grandson. You’ll find him a fine young-

ster, all things considered, though since he's had a year at Eton he's about one-half Johnny Bull. But there! You see I've told you a lot about myself, so I've 'soliloquized' as much as you—and you haven't told me your name yet.”

“That's right, so I haven't. I'm sorry. My name's Don, Donald I mean, Donald Stockbridge, and you already know I'm a second year man at the Naval Academy. On my first furlough, you see. We get one at the end of our two years.”

“Do you know many people on the Isthmus?”

“Oh, no sir. Not a soul. I'm taking this trip 'cause I want to know how it feels on the high seas. I've not done much real, sure 'nough boating, I don't count the work we do on the Severn, and out on Chesapeake Bay, and—oh, well, I guess you'll laugh at me, Mr. Spenway—but I've always been just about crazy to see how things were on the Spanish Main, the Bahamas, and Porte au Prince, and Cartagena, and all that. This ain't an expensive trip, and so here I am.”

“ Yay, Mr. Archie!” a high, childish voice broke in, and a small boy came racing toward them from the one cabin which opened on the promenade deck, the only “cabin de luxe” the “Colon” possessed.

He was a rather delicate looking youngster, with a mass of thick, fluffy yellow hair, big brown eyes, eyes that somehow suggested an alert little puppy-dog, and, like the Mid-die, the clear pink and whiteness of his skin showed some freckles. In spite of the almost delicate frailty of the small body, there was somehow a sturdiness about the way he stood, with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his knickers, his thin legs wide apart like his tutor's, that was manly and attractive. He was evidently quite at home on a ship, and already in full possession of his sea legs.

He glanced up at Don with a shy, friendly smile, and then turned again to his tutor:

“ I say, Mr. Archie,” he asked, “ain't we lifted Sandy Hook yet? Lemme git on the rail an' see if I can spot that old dory waitin' for the pilot.”

“ Can’t right now, old man,” the tutor answered. “ I’ve got to see about our places at table. Your mother won’t like it one little bit if she knows I’ve let it wait this long.”

“ But Mr. Archie, I’ll only stand up on the railin’ a minute, an’——”

“ I’ll hold on to him, Mr. Spenway,” Don struck in. “ That is, if you think you can trust him to me.”

“ All right, and thank you. Go ahead then, Billy,” Archie smiled. “ Swing on tight to him, Don—or is it to be Mr. Stockbridge? ”

“ Oh! it better be Don, hadn’t it, sir? ”

“ Why, of course it had, since you’re willing. Billy-boy, this young man is a naval cadet. Make friends quick. I’m off to have a heart-to-heart talk with the Purser. Don’t let my youngster fall overboard, Don,” and he disappeared inside.

Don gave Billy his hand and the small boy swung himself onto the top of the railing like a little monkey. Once up he took off his tiny, sky-blue cap, with a white “ E ” on it, and handed it to the Middie.

“ Hold on to my cap, will you please? ” he said. “ I wouldn’t lose it for something

pretty. No, sir! The Captain of our school gave me that for cricket, an' he's a big fellow, I tell you," and as he held his tough little body straight, Don's arm around his knees, with the breeze rumpling his yellow hair, he added: "It's just rippin', isn't it? *Just! And* there's the old light ship, an' there's the dory, an'—an', oh, I say, Mr. Midshipman-man, there's the Atlantic Ocean! An' aw Gee! *Ain't* she a-jumpin' an' a-friskin'? It's goin' to be some trip!"

"Well, young 'un," the Middie answered, "I sure hope it will be. It's my first trip."

"Oh, I say! Is it, though? Well, I just know it'll be bully."

"It isn't your first ocean voyage then, is it, Billy?"

"No, sir. It's my tenth."

"You don't say so! Hully Gee!"

CHAPTER II

THE SPANISH MAIN

*" I remember the sea fight far away,
How it thunder'd o'er the tide!
And the dead sea captains as they lay,
In their graves o'erlooking the tranquil bay,
Where they in battle died.
And the sound of that mournful song
Goes through me with a thrill:
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.' "*
(—Henry W. Longfellow.)

It has been said by a certain famous writer that, in the closet of every family, no matter how high its standing, there can always be found a skeleton, a social Pariah and the family of William Sturvisant vanZandt was no exception to this rule. In fact they were in possession of a more than usually annoying bit of fleshless framework, in that, added to its own peculiar horror as a skeleton, was the fact that it assumed at times the appearance of a dark horse.

Old Mr. vanZandt had had two children, a boy and a girl, the latter just about as silly

and light headed as a girl could well be. The former was Billy's father, heir to the old gentleman's millions until his death three years before this story begins, when the small boy stepped in in natural line for the inheritance. The daughter had, at the age of eighteen, run away from boarding school and joined a comic opera troupe, for which she had been very promptly disinherited. Nothing more had been heard of her, except that she had married, and had had one child, a son. Nothing else was known, not even the name of the boy's father.

It was following the news of this child's birth that old Mr. vanZandt had urged his son, then quite a young man, to marry pretty Evelyn Patton, the last of an old Virginia family. For four years after the marriage the couple remained childless, but in the fifth year a little son was born, and was christened William, after his Grandfather, who became his devoted slave forthwith. When William was about seven years old his father died, and his Grandfather's love for him seemed to increase, and yet Evelyn vanZandt, the small boy's mother, could not help feeling

apprehensive for fear her sister-in-law's son might put in an appearance and so wean the old gentleman from her own boy. Few people knew of this fear, but one of the few that did know was the small boy's tutor, and now, as he paced up and down the deck on the third night out, he thought of the many hysterical accounts he had heard from Billy's mother, and as he thought, he puffed slowly at his short, briarwood pipe, and, with the winds blowing in his face, he would now and then glance at the blue blackness of the horizon for a sight of the Southern Cross, for he had promised to show it to Don as soon as it rose.

The voyage, so far, had been a lively one, and the Atlantic had handsomely realized Master Billy's description of it, for it had kept up its "jumpin' an' friskin'" with the utmost zeal. So sportive did it become, in fact, after the "Colon" had passed Barne-gat and was a couple of hundred miles off Hatteras, that in most of the staterooms those nice, little, yellow lacquered boxes with the hinged lids, that steamboat companies so thoughtfully place beside each berth, were in

great demand. Don had had a short siege of this distressing "mal de mer," and it was with no little shame that he admitted it. The fact that his friend, the big tutor, had not been ill for a moment, was not particularly galling, for, somehow, he was the type of fellow you just knew would never be sick, but the knowledge that little, ten year old Billy "hadn't missed a meal," to use his own expression, was not so easy to swallow. And yet, in spite of it all, a close friendship had sprung up between the small boy and the Midshipman and so great was the former's rejoicing when Don had gained his sea legs and could tramp 'round the deck with Archie Spenway and himself between "coffee" and eight o'clock breakfast.

Only two things marred Billy's pleasure. The first was that while he sat on the Captain's right hand, between that officer and his mother, with the tutor on his left, Don sat at one of the long tables presided over by the First Officer. The only other people at the Captain's table were an old gentleman, the Governor General of the Canal Zone, returning from a six weeks' leave, and his

Grace, the Lord Bishop of the Bahamas, who, with his curly headed, impishly jolly son (a lad of fifteen), made up the august company. The other thorn in the little chap's side was the fact that his "Mater," as he called her in true English school-boy fashion, would not leave her cabin except at meal time as, after glancing just once at the passenger list, and having seen "that absolutely nobody was on board," as she told her maid, she preferred to sleep and read. She appeared, as I have said, at meals, for she was an excellent sailor, and no one, no matter how blase, is willing to bear the stigma of sea-sickness unnecessarily. Now, while the tutor walked the deck with his pipe and his thoughts for company, the youngster urged his mother to "come on out an' see Don."

"You say you like Pat, Mater," he pleaded, referring to the Bishop's son, "an' he ain't half so nice as Don; not half."

"Now, Billikins," his mother yawned, "I don't doubt that the boy is nice enough, but I certainly do not intend going out to meet him, so run along and find Mr. Spenway and

talk to him, though you really ought to be in bed; it is scandalous how late you stay up. Now run along, dear."

Billy walked out onto the deck with rather a dejected air but, seeing his tutor and Don standing under the bridge, he cheered up and joined them.

The four stars of the Southern Cross were still a little pale, while the twin stars above it, forming what is sometimes known as "the crown," twinkled more clearly. The fifth star that lies between the lower point and one of the two stars that form the cross bar, was so dim as to be hardly visible.

"I wish we could have had a look at Watling's Island, but we passed it too early this morning," the tutor was saying as the small boy joined them.

"Well, for me, I'm jolly glad we didn't," Billy grinned, "'cause you'd have asked me ever so many questions 'bout it; when Columbus discovered it, an', an' you just know, Mr. Archie, I can't remember dates; an' then Don would have laughed at me, 'cause Annapolis fellows know everything."

“ I wish I thought it ! ” Don laughed. “ But I would have liked to see the island. When’ll we be off——”

“ Oh, I say, Don ! ” Billy interrupted, real trouble in his voice, “ you ain’t goin’ to talk Geography, are you? ’Cause, if you are, I——”

“ Why, you little monkey,” Don answered, as he smiled down at him, “ all I was going to ask Mr. Archie was when we’ll be off Haiti. And,” he added with a grin, as he lifted the small boy to his shoulder, “ they say some of the niggers there eat folks. Honest ! You’re sort of skinny, Billikin, and so am I, but I fancy we’d make first rate broilers.” And then, more seriously, “ But, Gee ! think of the fights that have gone on in this part of the world, and of how it all must have looked to those old fellows, like Drake, and Hawkins, and——”

“ And Dampier, and Balboa,” the tutor added with a smile.

“ Yes, an’——an’ Captain Kidd, an’ Morgan,” Billy chimed in.

“ Thought you didn’t like Geography, you young fraud,” Don laughed, glancing up at

the rapt, earnest face of the small boy on his shoulder, and yet here you come in with the names of a couple of the toughest sort of old cut-throats."

"Well," Billy defended stoutly, "that ain't Geography, it's History, an' they were bully scrappers, anyway. So was Flint, an' that awful fellow, the one with the curly beard who used to chew up glass to make himself all bloody — what was his name, Mr. Archie?"

"You mean Teach, I think," Archie Spenway answered. "But where in the name of the Flying Dutchman have you picked up such a lot of blood-curdling things? What have you been reading, you young sinner?"

"I ain't been readin' nothin'," Billy replied, "but I borrowed a couple of books from Don for Pat to read out loud to me while Don was sick, an' they were rippin'; they had heaps an' lots of things in 'em."

"I say, Don," young Spenway smiled, though he was a little worried, too, "what the dickens have you been lending this young innocent?"

“ ‘Treasure Island,’ ” Don laughed, “ for one thing, and ‘The Master of Ballantrae’ for another. But I thought I was lending them to that scamp of a Bishop’s son, not to Billy. I might have known that British imp would have picked out all the hair-raising parts for the youngster’s benefit. But it is dandy reading, sir.”

“ Yes, I must admit it is, though not for a ten-year-old. Well, there’s the light from Cape Maisi, right off our starboard quarter, right at the end of Cuba, you know. See? ”

“ Sure! Let’s go into the bow and watch it. Come ahead.”

“ It can’t be done, old fellow; it’s almost midnight, and our small boy ought to have been in bed three hours ago, and so ought you and I. Shall I knock you up when we sight Haiti? ”

“ It’ll be mighty early, won’t it? ” a little doubtfully.

“ It certainly will; about five I should say.”

“ Tough luck! But call me all the same, and I’ll not only be up myself, but I’ll have that bunkie of mine on hand, too, if I have to yank him out by the hair of his brown head

—and Patsie has dandy hair for yanking, hasn't he? By-the-way, shall we drop Buster here overboard, so he can drift ashore, and be 'et up by the cannibals'? How about it, young 'un? Huh? Hullo, if he isn't fast asleep! I'll just carry him to your cabin, shall I?"

"Never mind, Don, I'll tote him. Hand him over. There'll be breakers ahead all right, when I have to wake him to undress—but that's one of the things tutors are made for! Good night, old man!"

"Good night, sir!" and the Middie dived down the broad stairway of the main saloon, just as the soft eight bells sounded over the quiet ship, their tones cutting out sweetly clear into the tropic night.

CHAPTER III

THE COASTS

*“ The swallow has set her six young on the rail,
And looks seaward:
The water’s in stripes, like a snake, olive pale,
To the leaward,—
On the weather side, black, spotted, white with the
wind,
‘ Good fortune departs, and disaster’s behind;’
Hark, the wind with its wants, and its infinite wail.”*
(—Robert Browning.)

“ Well,” Don said the next morning, as he stood with Archie Spenway, Billy, and Pat Dean, the Bishop’s son, gazing off at the shores of Haiti, “ all I’ve got to say is that I’m mighty glad I don’t have to live over there! ”

“ It is sort of grim,” Pat agreed, “ and I bet the beggars that snoop around over those rocks are a rotten sort. How about it, Buster? ”

“ Right-o, Pat! ” Billy assented, “ But I’d like to see some of ’em, shouldn’t you? Bet they’re an ugly lot! ”

“ Sure they are,” from Don. “ Can’t you just imagine a couple of boats putting off from that little point, and when they came alongside, to have a real, live bunch of buccaneers pile on board, with cutlasses between their teeth—though I’ll be hanged if I’d like to tote one that way myself, might bite the wrong side, you know. And can’t you just hear some long moustached, dirty faced chap, with a red bandana around his head, and maybe a pair of those big, gold ear rings, swishing a knife around our ribs, and roaring out that song you were singing this morning, Patsie? How does it go, now? ”

Pat grinned:

“ I don’t know the bally thing,” he said, “ not all of it; but it is no end jolly, ain’t it? It goes something like this, Mr. Archie:

‘ Oh, our Captain was a devil,

And our ship one bloody Hell—

Heave, lads! heave her up, as all
around the capstan go!—

Sing a deep-sea chantey,

As did Blackbeard and Cervante,

Work on board the Hell in life—

we’ll also work in Hell below! ’ ”

Archie Spenway sat down flat on the deck, tailor fashion, and began to laugh:

“Where in the world did you dig up that mosaic, Pat ? ” he demanded. “ Also, what do you think his Grace, the Bishop, would say to such a song, eh? ”

Pat scratched his fluffy brown head and frowned:

“ Well, you see, sir,” he said a little sulkily, “ *I* didn’t make up the song.”

“ Probably not, but where did you read it? ”

“ I didn’t read it anywhere. I heard a sailor singing it. He’s just about always singing it; I fancy it’s the only song he knows. And I sort of took it into my head that I’d like to learn it, so I’ve listened to him when he’s been swabbing down the decks just outside our cabin, while Don here’s been asleep. He’s a fierce looking specimen, the chap that sings it, and—oh, well! it’s sort of interesting I think. You—you won’t really tell on me to the Pater, will you, Mr. Archie? He’d give me billy-blue-hill if he knew, and maybe a licking too, if you go and blab to him.”

“Why, of course he won’t go and ‘blab,’ as you call it (a fellow needs a dictionary to know what you English kids are getting at half the time!), will you, Mr. Archie?”

The tutor lit his pipe before he answered:

“Indeed I won’t tell,” he said. “You know, Patsie, ‘a fellow feeling makes us wond’rous kind,’ and it hasn’t been so awfully many years since I was just as keen as you and Don about pirates. Fact. But adventures, real, man sized adventures, have gone out, entirely gone out.”

“Like your pipe?” Billy struck in wistfully. “Oh, Mr. Archie, don’t you just wish they hadn’t? Don’t you, though? Don’t you?”

The tutor put his arm around the small boy and drew his slim little body close, but he did not answer for some time. Instead, he puffed slowly at his pipe and looked long at the Haitian coast.

Grim and foreboding in its bare, rocky sombreness, it stretched itself along the cerulean waters of the ocean like some prehistoric creature of ill omen. Although the steamer was running a couple of miles off

shore, the detonating boom of the surf could be heard as it broke itself, in soapy froth, against the huge projections of jagged rock. The thin fringe of cocoanut palms gave the effect of an ogress attempting to bedeck herself in the green, lacey bravery of some poor little captive Princess from another world. Behind the coast line the great, heavily massive mountains piled themselves up like thunder clouds. At last the tutor spoke:

“Billy,” he said, his pleasant, deep voice very gentle, “promise me just one thing. When you have your day dreams, and all your cloudy air castles, come to me and tell me about them, won’t you? Please, old fellow! Don’t dream any more by yourself. You’ll promise, won’t you?”

He spoke so soberly that Billy looked at him in wide eyed surprise:

“Why, *rather!* I’ll tell you everything, sir,” he answered solemnly.

“Bully for you!” Spenway cried, forcing a briskness, that he did not entirely feel, into his voice. “Well, boys, there goes that dish-pan gong for chow! Shall we go in? Hullo, it’s late, too!” he added, glancing at his

watch. "It's quarter past eight. Lead the way, Commodore," to Billy, "and we'll follow." And so they joined the stream of passengers en route to the dining room.

As the tutor and his small charge waited at the entrance for Mrs. vanZandt to join them, the serious, troubled look returned once more to the young fellow's eyes:

"I don't know why," he thought, "but that coast line has got on my nerves, and a fellow of my size has no business to have nerves. But it has, for all that. And it's on account of the youngster, somehow. God be good to you, you poor little rich chap! You're heaps too fine a small boy to get into any trouble. Yes, God be good to you, you poor, little rich chap!"

CHAPTER IV

THE BLACK CROSS

*"In the afternoon they came unto a land,
In which it seeméd always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream."
(—Alfred Tennyson.)*

After breakfast, or "Chow," as Archie called it, the passengers dispersed themselves about the ship in accordance with their various tastes. The Governor General and Archie betook themselves to the smoking room, the Bishop curled himself up in his steamer chair with a copy of Theocritus, in the original, for company, while his young son, Pat, stayed inside to write a steamer letter to one of his chums, at Eton. Don, having seen the "Commodore," as Billy was now beginning to be called by everyone, leave the dining room with his mother, took it for granted that that youngster would remain with her, and so he joined three young engineers and a doctor, all returning to the

Canal Zone from their six weeks' holiday in the States, and became entirely engrossed in their accounts of the Isthmus. It was very hot, and the thick, rapidly gathering clouds gave every indication of a fast approaching down pour; something to be expected daily, so the doctor explained to Don, for the rainy season had set in about a month ago.

Since before breakfast, or to be more exact, ever since the "Colon" had passed Cuba the night before, the Long Atlantic swells had given place to a choppy sea, which now began to match the on-coming rain clouds in grayness. The ship was moving ahead with less motion, and people who had not shown their faces since passing Sandy Hook, began to put in an appearance on deck, notably a stout gentleman, with a black beard, who wore his steamer cap with much fierceness on the back of his head, and who, just before leaving New York, had regaled a few choice spirits in the smoking room concerning a fearful hurricane that he had once encountered "just before we lifted the Azores," and which, from the gentleman's account, must have been the whale of a storm, for he

informed his listeners that all hands on board were ill, even the seamen, with the exception of the Captain and himself.

“ This would be just dandy,” said Don, “ if it wasn’t so blamed hot. Does it ever get any smoother than this before we reach Colon, Doctor?”

“ Yes indeed!” the M. D. answered. “ You just wait until about three o’clock this afternoon, when we get in all among the Bahamas, Fortune Island, and the rest of them, and you’ll think you’re on a duck pond and, if the sun comes out so you can see their wonderful, smooth stretches of ivory white sand, and the soft, green daintiness of their palm fronds, with the deep masses of the trade clouds backing up toward the Caribbean, all pinky-white and smoke colored, except where they are torn with great shafts of gold, you’ll think you’re in Paradise.”

While all the above was taking place, Billy, having talked to his mother for a half hour or so, was requested by that lady to “ run along and find Mr. Archie.” He did look into the smoking room, but finding his tutor deep in a game of chess with the Governor

General, who was quivering with indignation at the result of a most ponderously thought out play, whereby he had just discovered that he had exposed his Queen, he slipped off unnoticed, and went as far forward as the promenade deck of the steamer extended, where he stood for a while, looking down on the main deck below him, with its coils of rope hawsers, and its partly opened hatches, opened so that the men before the mast could get some air, in the fo'castle. The wind blew a friendly greeting to him from the shallow, green expanse of the approaching Caribbean, and now and then, as some saucy, little wave would give the bow of the big liner a slap on her port quarter, and would send a shower of salty spray over the deck, the little Commodore would wrinkle his snubbed nose and sniff, delighted. His usually pale face was now a delicate shell pink, and whenever a few truant drops of sea water struck him, he would fairly squeal with happiness.

Suddenly his small-boy thoughts were interrupted by a voice, rather harsh, though not at all unpleasant, singing. The owner

was evidently one of the crew, for he walked over to the main hatch and opened it wider, after which he continued his song:

“ Oh, our Captain was a devil,

And our ship one bloody Hell—

(Heave lads! heave her up, as all
around the capstan go!)

Sing a deep-sea chantey,

As did Blackbeard, and Cervante ”—

Here he paused to light his corncob pipe, sheltering the tiny flame of the match behind a practiced hand. After a few puffs he continued, after a glance at the sky, which was so comprehensive as to include the youngster above him as well as everything else:

“ Work aboard the Hell in life—We’ll also work in Hell below!”

With a little chuckle of delight Billy climbed down the narrow, perpendicular ladder that was used as a short cut by the sailors when they went from the main deck to man the wheel in the deckhouse, and with the spryness of a small marmosette, he dropped close to the old sailor’s side, apparently much to the latter’s surprise.

“Your servant, sir!” he said, touching his cap with an old-fashioned salute, not often seen now-a-days.

“I say, Mr. Sailor-man!” Billy blurted out eagerly. “Won’t you sing me that song again, please? I—I just love it.”

“Why, and what song should you mean, now?” the old fellow asked thoughtfully. “Surely not the one I was just a’singing? That aint no song for a little boy! And even if I was the sort o’ chap to sing such a thing to a young gentleman like you, which I aint, you’d laugh at me when you got bigger. You’d be tellin’ your little boy some day how an old fool of a tar sang to you, an’ you that’ll be ownin’ ships of your own some time.”

“You can just bet I’ll own ships!” Billy agreed. “Lots of ’em! When I’m twenty-one, an’ Grandad vanZandt gives me a heap of money, I’ll buy hundreds of thousands of millions of ships—an’ I’ll make you captain on one of ’em, Mr. Sailor-man, ’cause I like you, ever so.”

“Much obliged, sir!” the sailor smiled, again touching his cap. “I’d be proud to

work under your house flag, Master—
Master——? ”

“ Billy,” the boy struck in.

“ Thank you, Master Billy. And in the meantime, while you’re growin’ up a bit, as we may say, would you like old Alf, that’s me, to spin you a yarn? ”

“ O-Oh, *will* you? That’ll be rippin’ ! But it’s beginnin’ to rain, so where’ll we go, Alf? ”

“ Just you leave that to me, sir. Come along into the lea of the dining room, under the starboard awning, and we’ll be as dry as powder.”

Once seated in the shelter of the superstructure, the old man began to tell tales of the sea, with their scenes reaching all the way from the Bay of Fundy to Rio Grande do Sul, and from Juneau to Bombay. The little Commodore, his lips parted over his small, white teeth, his eyes wide with excitement, listened, the admiration on his face ever on the increase. The strong, muscular arm of the sailor, thrown about his slender body, sent a strange thrill through him; it made him feel so weak and boyish, and yet he liked it, too. Finally, after a hair-raising

account of a hand to hand fight with a polar bear, somewhere off Terre del Fuego, the old man stopped and, glancing down at the boy's slight, brown hand, said:

"But you'll be doin' that yourself some day, Master Billy, when your muscles get bigger. Not but what you're solid enough for your age, I don't doubt. How about the right arm, now? Pretty firm?"

"I dunno," Billy answered, blushing. "Feel it, an' tell me how it is."

The sailor felt the white duck sleeve, and then shook his grey head:

"Can't tell much about it that way," he said. "You'll have to roll up your sleeve as high as you can—or, I'll tell you what, slip your arm out from the top of your Middie-blouse, it'll only take a second, and I do love to see a good, sturdy arm!"

Billy slipped his right arm out of the blouse, and held it toward the man. The naked shoulder, and the round, white upper arm, were in deep contrast to the tan on the forearm, but the whole was boyishly slight.

With a sudden, quick movement, the sailor pushed the arm above his head and, as the

boy began to struggle, he cut lightly two thin, deep marks, in the shape of a cross, under the armpit, but instead of a spurt of blood, the satiny skin remained dry, with only a purplish line following the lips of the wound.

CHAPTER V

THE RIGHT SORT

*“ It maybe that fate will give me life and leave to row
once more—*

*Set some strong man free for fighting, as I take awhile
his oar.*

*But today I leave the galley. Shall I curse her service
then?*

*God be thanked—whate’er comes after, I have lived
and toiled with men.”*

(—Rudyard Kipling.)

Late on the afternoon of the sixth day from the time that she had left New York, the “ Colon ” dropped anchor off Cristobal, with the light house on Toro Point winking a greeting to her in the rapidly gathering darkness, for there is almost no twilight in the tropics.

Don and the Bishop’s son stayed out on deck all night on account of the severe, sticky heat, for though there was a good breeze blowing from the Caribbean, the ship, holding by only one anchor, would swing, bow on, to it, so that the staterooms received but small benefit from it.

By six o'clock the next morning everybody on board was up, and by seven the khaki clad quarantine officer had boarded the ship and she had cautiously nosed her way into her berth, and her passengers streamed down onto the dock and, having once been received under its sloping roof of corrugated iron, where the heat was simply indescribable, they wished most devoutly that they were on board again. After an hour or so of delay, the special train that was to carry them to Panama city pulled out on its slow, hot, but wonderfully interesting transcontinental run.

Much to poor Pat's disgust, the Bishop insisted on keeping him close to the Episcopal side in the "La France" (the private car that was coupled on to the rear of the train for the use of the Governor-General). It is needless to say that both Billy and his mother were also on board as guests of the General, as was also Archie Spenway. As for Don, it is true he missed his friends, but for all that, he enjoyed the short railroad journey a great deal; for the young doctor, and two of the three engineers with whom he

had talked so much on the run from New York, stuck to him to a man, and the more questions he asked them, the better they seemed to like it, so they all got along famously.

Past Mindi, Gatun, and Gorgona; past Tabernilla, Bas Obispo, and Las Cascadas, sped the train, ever climbing higher and higher from the low, swampy stretches of the Chagres River to the soft deepness of the mountain ranges that form the connecting link between the Mexican Rockies and the Andes. As they slowed down for the station at Empire, the doctor turned to Don:

"This will interest you, Stockbridge," he said, "because the Marines have their camp here, up on that hill. See? When we get to Culebra, that's the next stop, you know, we'll go out on the platform with Brown and Drake," indicating the two engineers, "and we'll stay out till we get to Paraiso. You get a first rate view up the cut, just after you pass our new reservoir, about half way between the two places."

"I'll feel sort of lost when you two fellows drop us at Culebra," Don said, as he

shook hands with the engineers. "You've been just dandy to me, you know."

"Well," young Brown spoke up heartily, "we'll miss you, too, Don—but the doctor will talk sanitation with you until you'll forget us. He knew we'd chuck him out of the window if he tried it on us. It's his hobby, you know. Well, I hope the Lord will temper the wind to the shorn lamb. How about it, doctor?"

"Well, I've always known that the engineering department had, with the possible exception of the Quartermaster's crown, the biggest lot of cheek to be seen on the Isthmus," the doctor grinned, "but I'll be hanged if you two don't bear the palm! Haven't I sat like a Buddha reincarnated and listened to the pair of you tell this husky infant all about the merits of Lock canals, the punkness of Sea-level canals, and all that rot? Get off here, and lose yourselves in the jungle, and let me continue my journey to Ancon in peace."

"Go to it, Doctor!" Brown laughed in high glee. "Only don't color your sanitary exposé too highly, old son. 'Maxima reve-

rentia debitur pueris,' you know. Keep up your oration, it'll keep the deadly *Stegomyia*" (N. B. now *Aëdes Ægyptus*) "or whatever you M. D.'s call the poor, little yellow fever mosquito, away from Mr. Midshipman Easy here. So long, boy! Come out and see us before you sail. We're always glad to have the right sort out here; we like 'em."

"So long!" Don called, and he and the doctor stood on the steps of the coach, leaning far out at the imminent risk of falling off, as they waved their steamer caps after their two friends until the curve in the track around Culebra mountain hid them.

"Might as well stay out here, hadn't we, sir?" Don asked, as he and the doctor climbed back to the platform. "You said something about seeing the cut in a little while. It's an awful nuisance that that old private car's on behind. If it wasn't, this would be the rear coach and we could see dandy."

"It is aggravating," the doctor assented. "The General would be glad for us to go back in his car, but I just tell you, Donny, your Uncle Dudley won't ask. No, sir! I

can't swallow that millionaire woman! The kid seems to be a nice, spry, wide awake little chap, a first rate specimen of Young America, but good Lord! The Mother! Whew! Here's the reservoir. Isn't it a daisy? Those two boys we dropped at Culebra helped to build that. And here's the cut. Take a good look."

As the Midshipman complied, it seemed to him as if the soft, green sides of the huge mountain had been torn apart, leaving a vast, sloping gash, the sides of which dropped in terraces to the myriad of tracks at the bottom. And what colors, what tints did not the dirt, sand and rock sides possess! Terra cotta, Indian brown, shading to a burnt Sienna, contrasted with all shades of grey, from slate color to the softest shade of pearl, which, in its turn, blended into the yellow ochre of the clay bottom. Through it all crawled innumerable dirt trains, some filled with the debris torn up by the big steam shovels, some hurrying back to be reloaded. Higher up, on the jungle covered terraces that were not in use, stood thousands of rusty, weather worn pieces of machinery,

left by the old French canal company; grim reminders of a brave fight, and a tragic failure.

To Don, boy-like, the only appeal was from the actual work going forward:

“Gee!” he exclaimed, his smooth face flushing. “Don’t it make a fellow proud of being an American citizen?”

“Yes,” the doctor agreed, with a smile at the lad’s earnest face, “it does. And,” he added, his own face settling into a serious expression, “we’re all working together for this, you see. All of the men higher up, all the Departments, all the Divisions, *all* of us—and it’s that, that’ll carry it through.”

“You just bet it will!” Don cried enthusiastically, as they re-entered the coach.

For a few minutes they sat in silence, and then the boy began to frown.

“What’s wrong, Donny?” his friend asked.

“I’m just pulling myself down to the present from the past and the future, sir,” the boy explained. “I’ve got to ask you something, and I’ll have to be pretty plain about it. Isn’t there any hotel in Panama that don’t

cost so awful much? The only one you fellows talked about was the 'Hotel Central,' and the prices there, from what you said, were just tough. Where else could a fellow go? ”

“ Well, I don't know that you need bother your yellow head about hotels,” the doctor said, with a smile, “ because I'm going to take you to my quarters, at Ancon. I'll kidnap you, if necessary.”

“ Oh, but I say! I'd be awfully in your way! and——”

“ Nothing of the kind! Why, you young heathen! I want you to come. Does that suit you? Remember what Brown said to you at Culebra? Well, *you'll* find it the case all over the Canal Zone; everybody wouldn't, but you will. We're always glad to have the right sort here. We like 'em! ”

CHAPTER VI.

THE LADY OF THE PRESIDENCIA

*“ When I first put this uniform on,
I said, as I looked in the glass:
‘ It’s one to a million,
If any civilian
My figure and form can surpass! ’ ”*
(—Sir Charles Gilbert.)

“ Hurry up, Narcissus! ” the doctor called jovially, as he walked across the wire netting enclosure of the veranda from the bathroom to his bedroom, and stood smiling at Don, who was looking at himself in the long, old-fashioned French mirror.

The boy had dressed himself in all the trig nattiness of a United States Naval cadet’s white uniform:

“ Too much dog, sir? ” he asked with an embarrassed grin, as he looked down at his white Oxfords, and white silk socks—quite the first pair he had ever owned, be it added.

“ Not a bit of it, not a bit of it! ” the doctor answered, showing in his face the pleasure he felt in the youngster’s sturdy, erect figure,

and clear skinned, good-humored face. "Quite a Bayeux tapestry, with a story of efficient deeds to come."

"I didn't know I'd taken so long to get into these glad rags of mine," Don said apologetically, "but I got to feeling so chesty when you told me about our going to the President's palace—what's the right word for it?"

"Presidencia, I fancy you mean."

"That's it—to the Presidencia, that I wanted to look as fit as I could. Say, doctor, how on earth did you manage to get 'em to let you bring me?"

The doctor laughed.

"Why, that was easy. It's Friday, and the President and his wife always receive on Friday evening. Well, while you were down at the Ville de Paris squandering your pesos on those white shoes, I drove to the Presidencia and met Madam Amador and the President just going out for a drive in the Sabanas, and when I told her that I had an American Naval cadet staying with me, she told me to be sure to bring you down to-

night. How did you get along with your purchases?

“Why, I only got the shoes and then went up the street to the American Bazaar and got these socks. Gee, but they cost a lot! If it hadn’t sort of been for the honor of the Service, I wouldn’t have bought ’em. Is everything so expensive down here?”

“No, but that kind of stuff is. Now I’m ready for dinner, if you are, and you ought to be, for we both missed breakfast. That blamed train got in an hour late, and it was two o’clock before we got up here, and I know Frago, he’s the chief Mess steward, too well not to know he wouldn’t save anything after one, and breakfast is supposed to be anywhere from eleven-thirty to twelve-thirty, you know.”

“Well, I’m hungry, all right,” Don admitted, “and I’m as keen for chow as you are. Also, I’m quite ready.” And, putting on his white and gold cap, he followed the doctor out of the bungalow, and together they climbed the white macadam road that curved through the grounds of Ancon hospital, on its way up the mountain, and, hav-

ing reached the long, two storied building, with the line of royal palms in front, the two walked up the steps on to the wide, carefully screened veranda, and stood for a moment looking at the smooth waters of the Pacific, with the point, on which stood all that was left of the old city of Panama, destroyed by Morgan in 1671, on their left, some miles in the offing; while to their right Ancon mountain rose sheer, for about seven hundred feet. Then they went in to dinner.

The doctor was not to be reassigned to duty until the next day, so after dinner he took his young guest back to his quarters, and while he and the two other physicians who shared his bungalow with him, smoked and exchanged Isthmian news with that from "God's country," the Midshipman listened to them in silence until it was time for them to start for the Presidencia.

"It is a queer thing to me," the doctor remarked as the two walked down the hill, and out of the hospital gate, "that if you don't happen to want one of these blamed little one-horse caruajes you'll always find half a dozen of them down at the gate, but

I'll bet we'll have to walk to the Avenida Central before we get one."

True to his prophecy, they had to walk the entire length of the Avenida del Cuartro de Julio, and down the Avenida Central until they reached the Plaza del Santa Anna.

"I'll be hanged if I ever saw such sidewalks," said Don, as he and his friend climbed up the steps that joined one part of the smooth surfaced pavements to another.

The doctor's only reply to him was to hold up two fingers, and whistle shrilly, and then to begin to bawl:

"Venga aca!" he shouted, and a small, two seated coach, pulled by a diminutive Peruvian horse, drew up, and they got into it and rattled off to the Presidencia.

"I say, doctor," Don begged, "just h-hold up a s-second, w-won't you please?"

"Why, what the deuce is the matter?" the M. D. asked, stopping half way across the flower filled patio of the palace, with its big fountain in the center, and the cool, shell pink tiles with which it was paved.

"I'm—I'm scared!" the Midshipman gulped miserably.

The doctor's hearty laugh rang through the stillness, and he placed one hand on the lad's white duck shoulder:

"Don't get frightened already," he said. "This is nothing to what's coming." And he pushed the cadet up the broad stairway, and around the balcony to the entrance of the salon, and a moment later they were making their way through the length of a high pitched, yellow hung room, near one end of which stood a small group of people, and then Don found himself standing in front of a handsome, bejeweled woman, with a sweet graciousness of face and manner that somehow made a lump rise in his throat, a queer feeling of loyalty, such as Queen Elizabeth's sailor-boys are said to have felt in her presence. As the doctor presented him, he clicked his heels together preparatory to giving the traditional military bow, but, as he he looked into this lady's high bred, gentle face, he very quietly lifted to his lips the hand she held out to him.

The scene was a gay one, and yet had a touch of democracy about it that was good to see. The President's wife kept the Mid-

shipman by her for almost the whole of the half hour that he and the doctor stayed, and he lost all his shyness as he listened to her talk. She was frankly pleased by this big, rather clumsy boy's open adoration, and called him "mia propiedad" (my property). Luckily he knew Spanish quite well, for the Señora spoke almost no English.

Seated on a sofa by one of the long French windows that, standing open, let in a soft breath of night air from the Pacific, he told her of his love for the sea, and of his trip to the Isthmus from New York. Although she had taken the trip time without number, she listened with the unaffected interest that she felt, throwing in an occasional "Aie!" accompanied with a lift of her white shoulders. The old President smiled over at the two and, turning to Mrs. vanZandt, who was standing by him with the wife of the British Minister, said, in English:

"Maria has now adopted another son! See, the big boy in the white uniform? But I beg your pardon, you have not yourself yet met my wife," and he led the way to Madam's side, and introduced the American



HE TOLD HER OF HIS LOVE FOR THE SEA.

woman. Madam Amador's eyes twinkled with mischief, for Don had told her of how completely Mrs. vanZandt had held herself aloof on board the "Colon," and she now noted with quiet amusement the effusive greeting the boy received.

"Maria," said the President, "Mrs. vanZandt's little son and his tutor are going to Taboga tomorrow."

"Aie!" Madam exclaimed. "Then tell her to be sure that they eat largely of the Taboga pineapples. They are heavenly! But does not the Señora go also?"

"No, Madam," Mrs. vanZandt answered, in French, a language that Madam Amador spoke as well as her own, "I cannot 'rough it,' as my little boy expresses it, so I must remain in Panama, at the Legation. He and his tutor, and the son of the Lord Bishop of the Bahamas are going, and," smiling graciously at Don, "I am hoping that this young man will go, too. My boy thinks so much of him."

"Que dice, mia propiedad?" asked the President's wife.

“ I’d just love to, if it would be all right,” the Middie answered, a slight grin on his mouth as he caught the merry laugh in Madame’s dark eyes.

“ Good! ” said Mrs. vanZandt. “ The boys leave the Hotel Marina at nine o’clock.”

A little later, as Don and the doctor walked toward the Plaza del Cathedral, in quest of a cab, the M. D. began to talk of his trips to Europe, and ended by telling of his never having seen so much as one “ crowned head.”

“ Well, *I* have,” said Don solemnly.

“ Where? ” asked the doctor. “ Thought you told me you’d never been to Europe.”

“ I haven’t,” the Midshipman answered, “ but I’ve met Royalty all the same. I’ve met the Lady of the Presidencia.”

CHAPTER VII

“ THE MERRY MEN ”

*“ A wet sheet, and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast.
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
While like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lea.”*

*“ ‘ Oh, for a soft and gentle wind!’
I heard a fair one cry;
But give to me the swelling breeze,
And white waves heaving high.
The white waves heaving high, my lads,
The good ship tight and free—
The world of waters is our home,
And merry men are we.”*
(—Alen Cunningham.)

A stiff wind was blowing, and the small sloop, skimming over the waters of the Bay of Panama, made good headway under one jib, a mainsail, and her topsail. In length she was not much larger than a good sized cat-boat, but her lines, as befitted her sloop rig, were slighter and more rakish. She was a

well made little craft and had been built on the Clyde and brought over for the use of the British Minister but, after a few months, that diplomat had purchased a motorboat and so he had gladly sold the "Sapalo" to Mrs. vanZandt, who had given it to Billy for a birthday present. The "Sapalo" had, beside the little Commodore and his three friends, two deck hands on board, an American who had shipped the day before and who had just finished his time on a four masted schooner that was now lying off La Boca with a load of coal from Australia, and a boy of about Pat's age. He was part Spaniard and part Indian, and had worked on the "Sapalo" ever since her arrival from England. His name was Blas. Neither of these two were really needed, because what Archie Spenway and Don didn't know about a sail boat wasn't worth the knowing, and Pat was almost as proficient in nautical lore. All of them swam like ducks, and in this Billy could hold his own with his elders, though of course he did not have their endurance. Still the deckhands could do the dirty work, and Blas' familiarity with the coast was valuable

to them, so on the whole, things on board were arranged to everyone's liking.

Although one does not need any vast knowledge of navigation to make the short runs that the owners of the “Sapalo” planned to take, Don, being more versed in the art than the others, was made captain, and the rest took turn and turn about at the tiny wheel, or left it to the Seaman, Smith, or to Blas.

After they had cleared the harbor proper, and had left Flamenco, Perico and Naos, the three small mountain islands that shut it in, behind them, they found the open waters of the Pacific stretched out before them a clear expanse, except where the eleven hundred feet of Taboga lifted itself in a soft, humid haze in the distance, and a couple of miles from it a lesser island, Tabogilla, lay like a small son watching his big father, whom he greatly resembles. Although the sun was shining brightly, the seas were running high, and now and then the “Sapalo” would dip her bowsprit under the water and, as she righted herself, the spray would be sent flying over the deck. Don was at the wheel,

and his three friends were loafing on the small expanse of after deck, talking lazily. The Midshipman was, of course, standing, and Billy had adroitly curled himself in the older boy's shadow. The two hands were forward.

"I wish," Billy spoke a little resentfully, as he gazed from his short khaki knickers to the long, white duck sailor trousers of his three elders, "I wish *I* could wear long pants. When can I, Mr. Archie?"

"Billy, wait till you grow stronger,
And your little legs are longer;
Then you may wear long pants."

Archie laughed back at him teasingly; then he added to Don: "I say, Captain, who says I'm not a poet?"

"Yah!" Don grinned. "Tennyson altered to suit! You're some poet, all right, Mr. Archie! Say, Commodore," to Billy, "bet you don't know why our pants are so big around the bottoms."

"Sure I know why," Billy answered. "It's so you can git 'em rolled above your knees."

“ Right-o ! ” from Archie. “ But Commodore, Commodore, how often must I tell you not to say ‘ git ’ ? ”

“ Yes, sir ! Sorry ! ”

“ Oh, well, whether we ‘ git ’ them up, or get them up above our knees, your answer’s right, as Mr. Archie says,” Don struck in. “ But here’s another stumper for you, young ’un : Why do we have ’em laced up the back ? How about it, Buster ? ”

“ I dunno ; not unless you think it looks nice, an’ I don’t think it does.”

“ Why, we do it so, if we fall overboard, we can grab hold of this knot and with one pull undo the lacers, and then off come our pants.”

“ Aw, hire a hall, Don ! ” Pat drawled, as he lay on his back, with his small, soft, white Jackie’s cap tilted over his brown eyes. “ And so, having expounded this most interesting theory, dear students, I will call your attention to our gauze undershirts. You observe they are without sleeves. That is to show off the beauty of our manly arms and shoulders. The fact that the old sun burns the deuce out of us, is another reason for leaving our-

selves half undressed—but you must get Mr. Archie to tell you why, Billy-Billy, 'cause I can't."

"We'll make you walk the plank if you don't quit kiddin' us, you curly-headed land-lubber!" Don laughed.

"Yes, an' then Taboga Bill'll git—get, I mean—you," Billy added, smiling as he shook his finger at the Bishop's son.

"Who's he, Commodore?" Archie inquired. "Another buccaneer?"

The small boy wrinkled his freckled nose gleefully.

"No, siree! He's worse than a buccaneer, ever so much worse! He's a great, big, man-eatin' shark, and oh, Mr. Archie, he's just one bully old shark! He can chew up a boy in one snap, an' he could eat up a big fellow like you, or Mr. Midshipman Easy here, in 'bout three. He's rippin'! An' when he bites a kid his teeth go '*Gee-runch-up!*'"

"Must be a fish of sorts!" Pat struck in, with a slow grin.

"Here's a how-d' ye-do!" Archie smiled ruefully. "What's a tutor to do when he has to look after a boy with an inquiring mind

like yours? What between the Captain—that’s Don, you know—and the First Officer—that’s Pat—telling you about buccaneers, and people chewing glass, and about man-eating sharks, I——”

“But they didn’t tell me ’bout Taboga Bill,” the youngster interrupted. “Blas told me.”

“Well, if this whole bunch don’t stop telling you things, there’ll be a great, big, beautiful mutiny on board, headed by me.”

“And who are you,” Don laughed, as he threw the wheel over a point to starboard, “to talk of mutiny against the Commodore, and the Captain, and the First Officer?”

“I’m Ship’s Cook, and not a man of you gets a bite out of the galley unless you quit stuffing my Commodore with bloody cutlasses, doubloons and pieces of eight.”

“Blas,” Don called suddenly, “take this wheel. We’re almost off the island.” And as the boy came aft he added: “Where’ll we anchor?”

“The best place, sir,” Blas answered in very good English, “is right off the little island you see joined to Taboga by that

stretch of sand. There, to starboard, sir. That is Moro Island, and at high tide it is divided from Taboga by the water."

"Good boy! We'll come about in the lee of it. Stand by to cast anchor—that means you, Patsie."

The Bishop's son grunted and obeyed, in came the jib, the anchor splashed overboard, and a moment later down rattled the main-sail.

CHAPTER VIII

AGAIN THE BLACK CROSS.

*“ For there isn’t a job on the top of the earth the
beggar don’t know nor do.*

*You can leave him at night on a bald man’s ’ead, to
paddle ’is own canoe;*

*’E’s a sort of a bloomin’ cosmopolouse—soldier an’
sailor too.”*

(—Rudyard Kipling.)

Taboga! Surely it is one of the fairest gems in this diadem of equatorial sunshine; and what if her charm is rather that of some well cut bit of Asiatic jade, than the more dazzling pricelessness of an emerald—is it not the rarity of the latter, more than its superior beauty that attracts? There are many islands clustered in this part of the Pacific Ocean, close to the “line,” that are like Taboga ; Tabogilla, Urivá, Boná, Otoki—and many others, but it is none the less attractive for all that. Rocks, covered with soft masses of greenish brown sea-weed, are visible for about thirty yards at low water, but are hidden under the green seas

of the little bay when the wonderful eighteen to twenty foot tide rolls in, one of the greatest tides in the world. Back of the rocks lies a stretch of pale brown pebbles, and, sloping up gently from this is the cream white of the sand, at the border of which the village begins to raise itself in a series of terraces, with its stucco houses of many colors; turquoise, aqua marine, cobalt, chocolate, green-bice, grey, salmon and rose pink and gamboge—nothing glaring because of the softening touch of the master artist, Time, whose brush has subdued it all, even to the adding of velvety bits of green moss on the terracotta of the roof tiles. There are no sidewalks, and the rough cobble stones in the narrow, winding streets have grass peeping between them. On the highest terrace are a line of queer, square adobe huts with peaked, thatched roofs, and behind this are rows of banana and pineapple plants and a double line of cocoanut palms, from the roots of which the mountain rises abruptly, the density of its conglomerate foliage stopping about a hundred feet from the top, to be replaced by masses of sharp, jagged granite,

and, above all, across the still waters of Ancon cove, with its smooth, firm beach of pure white sand, stands a black cross, grim, sinister and horrible; no cross at the foot of which to rest one's sorrows, but a crucifix, a cross of pain, placed, so the story has it, by an old priest to mark the resting place of a few unhappy boys who escaped from the burning of old Panama, only to be followed to Taboga by some of Morgan's buccaneers, there to be murdered brutally. An evil, crooked, mishapen, black thing, this cross, be it in the memory of boys, or men, or women.

As the late afternoon sun dropped behind the mountain the three young fellows and the small boy who constituted the "wardroom mess," as Don called it in true naval style, looked up from the deck of the "Sapalo" at the cool shadows that now lay over the village, and the stillness that had somehow held them all during the hot afternoon was broken by Archie, who, knocking out the ashes from the bowl of his pipe against the side of the sloop, said, in a matter of fact voice:

“Captain, kindly reduce my Commodore to the ranks and make him cabin boy long enough to lend a hand with the preparations for chow.”

“Oh, but I say, Captain,” Billy cried, grinning lazily, “if you do that, I’ll have you up for court martial for insubordination.”

“My, my!” Don answered sleepily. “What a great, big word for such a small boy! I think we’d better name this craft the ‘Cozy Chicken Coop,’ like the boat I was singing about after breakfast this morning. Buster, you won’t mind helping Mr. Archie get supper, will you? If we’d left the Marina at nine o’clock, like we planned, ’stead of one, we’d of had more time to loaf before starting to work.”

“Course I won’t mind helping, only I wish you’d give a fellow orders, ’stead of askin’ him. It’s heaps more fun, honest it is.”

“All right!” Don agreed, jumping to his legs, and then, in a voice that rang out over the stillness of the waters and sent a group of pelicans, who had been fishing, back to their nests on Moro in screaming indignation, he yelled, as he pointed to the open

hatch: "Commodore, step alive there! Go down into the galley and render whatever assistance is necessary to the ship's cook!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" was the delighted response, as the small boy dived below decks with Archie at his heels. A few minutes later the tutor's voice called up the companion-way:

"'O Captain, my Captain,' it's hot as tophet down here! *No hay heilo*, either!"

"Aw, speak English, Mr. Archie," Pat expostulated, sticking his head down the hatch.

"Well, in other words, there's no ice, so heaven send that the wind has cooled the water in that alcarazar up in the rigging. Run aloft, my hearty, and bring it down—and if you drop it I'll come up and break your head."

"Huh!" Pat grinned. "Your hearty will get it, but he's not going aloft, he weighs too much. The Captain," looking at Don's big bulk, "is agile and spry; he'll fetch it."

"Well, since 'a voice from the tomb' won't move you, Patsie," Archie said as he climbed on deck, the tan on the big muscles

of his bare arms and shoulders glistening under the sweat that tumbled from them, "I'll get the blamed thing myself," and in a few seconds he had the big, earthenware water jar under one arm and had again disappeared below, and in a moment later the really beautiful tones of his fresh, young baritone were heard singing jovially to the accompaniment of rattling tins:

" ' Of all the wives as e'er I know—

Yea-ho, lads ho,

Yea-ho, lads ho—

There's none like Nancy Lee, I trow—

Yea ho, lads ho, lads ho!

And there she stands and waves her
hands upon the quay '—

"Hand me those eggs, there's a good fellow, Commodore. That's the stuff! Look out for the hot fat when I drop 'em in; and say, sing, that's a good chap!" and then, as the eggs crackled and hissed in the skillet, he continued:

" ' And offers up a prayer of love for Jack
at sea—

Yea-ho, lads ho, lads ho! ' "

Billy was one of the special chorister-boys at Eton, and it was good to hear the clear, passionless notes of his boy-voice blending with the smooth, soft deepness of the baritone:

“ ‘ A sailor’s wife a sailor’s star should be—
Yea-ho, we go across the sea!

A sailor’s wife a sailor’s star should be—
Yea-ho, we go across the sea!’ ”

After several repetitions of this song Billy appeared on deck to say that the ship’s cook said that if the Captain and the First Officer wanted any supper, they would have to come on down and help bring it up, and so Pat and Don lent a hand with the ham, eggs, toast, jam and tea, with condensed milk, that constituted the meal, and they all fell to with a will.

“ The beauty of this mode of life,” said Archie, when they had finished, “ is that washing up is so simple. All we have to do is to put the plates and cups and so on in that big dishpan forward, pour hot water over them, and leave it for the gentle Blas.”

“ What about a swim? ” the Middie asked.

“Good idea, after a little. When I’ve smoked two pipefuls we can strip off, slip on our trunks—we’re too near the village, I’m sorry to say, for us to bathe as the Good Lord intended—and we’ll have a plunge. In the meantime, Pat, get out your violin and play something really worth while, and then Don will get his banjo, and we’ll all bay at the moon.”

Pat went down into the small cabin and returned with his precious violin, an almost priceless Cremona. A strange mixture, this mischievous, dark skinned English school-boy! For in the crystalline of his soul he held the musical ability of a genius, and the Bishop had spared no expense in his training.

Now, in the stillness that had settled over the face of the quiet, grey waters, came the tones of the lovely old instrument, and Archie, his beautiful, muscular young bulk curled up on the deck, with the night wind off the Pacific rumpling his golden curls, sighed ecstatically.

First the somber, life history as sung out wonderfully from under the dark lad’s bow, and from the brown fingers of his rather

heavy, very thick wristed hand, as told in Carl Bohm's great "Elegie," and then, delicately pure, like some bit of rare old lace, broke the singing notes of the Humoresque, changing at the end to the richer depths of the G string in the double toned, muted harmonics of the finale.

Not a sound followed Dvorak's tiny masterpiece, except the soft splash of oars as some flat bottomed panga rowed by, and even this ceased a moment later, as the rower rested on his oars, listening to the music, for Pat had begun to play again, this time the baccarolle from "Les Contes d'Hoffman." The very words almost sang themselves from the humming strings:

"O belle nuit, O nuit d'amour."

As he finished playing, Don, who had taken out his banjo, slipped it back into its case with a shy little shake of his head, and Pat, after putting both his own and Don's instruments once more in the cabin, came on deck again, his brown eyes, their usual impishness gone, all soft with the look of some husky boy lover.

“Can’t we go for that swim now, Mr. Archie?” Billy asked, breaking the stillness. “I’m no end keen to go.”

“Yes, we’ll peel off right now,” and in almost no time the four friends were stripped, save for their short trunks, and were balancing in a row on the sloop’s side.

“We look like the flags of all nations!” Pat laughed. “Just glance down the line at the trunks, will you? Don’s are white, like his legs, with a navy blue stripe down the side; yours are black, Mr. Archie; mine are the sky blue Eton trunks, and so are the Commodore’s.

It was a contrast of more than trunks, however, as the four stood balancing there. Archie, perfectly built from head to toe, like some young Greek God, or a second Pheidippides, the skin of his big body as smooth as satin. Next to him, Pat; a sun browned, dark eyed, fun-loving young imp, with a mass of thick, fluffy dark hair with splashes of gold in it, the skin of his saucy, turned up nosed face as smooth as that on his stocky, well muscled body, and holding the same soft tan, even down to his thick, capable wrists, and

his ankles. Then Don, his yellow head as usual with his hair slicked carefully back, big, blonde, pink and white as to face, his skin having the same glossiness as Archie's, only more cream colored and less pure white than the tutor's, like ivory, his arms stretched above his head ready for the dive. Last of all the little Commodore, looking more husky now that he was naked, than anyone would have thought to see him dressed, brown armed, white bodied, slim, and very much alive, holding himself easily like the rest, waiting for the signal to go in.

"Get on your marks, set, *go!*" called Archie, and in flashed the four, and as they all came to the surface, their whoops of delight could have been heard for half a mile or so.

"How's this for swimming, Don?" the tutor laughed happily, as, a half hour later, they stood, all dripping wet, on the deck.

"Fine and dandy, sir," the Middie replied, "but we all forgot one thing; 'specially the Commodore."

"What'd I forget, Donny?" Billy asked suspiciously.

"*Gee-runch-up!*" Don answered solemnly, and just dodged in time to miss Archie's wet trunks, which, rolled into a ball, had been thrown at his head.

Billy sighed:

"That's right," he said slowly. "We didn't see a thing of Taboga Bill, did we? Not even a fin! Gee!"

"Too bad, wasn't it?" Archie chuckled.

"*Rather!*" with a giggle, from Pat, and as they all began to dress, he added, "Rotten luck we missed the old dear. I told you he was a fish of sorts."

CHAPTER IX

“MR. MANDARIN”

*“ And wow! Tam saw an unco’ sight!
Warlocks and witches in a dance;
Nae cotillion brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
At winnock-bunker in the east,
There sat auld Nick in shape o’ beast;
A towsie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge.”*
(—Robert Burns.)

It had been planned the night before that the “wardroom mess” would all get up early, before six-thirty coffee, and take another plunge, but, as the sun rose out of the ocean, and the clouds of thick vapor began to lift, the chill dampness of the tropical rainy season made the water anything but inviting. Blas and Smith had both found a place in the village where they were to stay except for a couple of hours in the morning, or when they were especially wanted, and so the four left on board the good ship “Sapalo” had more room.

Promptly at six o'clock Don ran up the yachting ensign from the flagstaff aft, and as the breeze caught it and blew it out, the appearance from the distance was like that of the regular national ensign, for both have the thirteen stripes of red and white, and the blue field for the stars is identical. Instead of the regular number of stars, however, the yachting ensign has a circle of thirteen, surrounding a white anchor.

While Blas was washing the dishes after coffee, a panga put off from the island and rowed over toward the Sapalo. As it drew alongside and the stalwart, bare-legged boatman put up his oars, the person in the stern sheets, a handsome Spanish boy of about Billy's age, handed a note to Archie, who leaned over the rail to get it.

"It is for the Señor Midshipman," he said, and, evidently feeling that he had done all that anyone could require of him, he gave an order to the boatman, and was rowed away.

"Don," Archie grinned, as he walked aft with the letter in his hand, "here are laurels for you, you young fusser. I see clearly that

you'll make good as a naval officer; nobody else could have begun a correspondence with a dark eyed Señorita in so short a time.”

Don blushed.

“ I didn't! ” he said, a little gruffly.

“ Sure you did. You must have. Here's the proof,” handing him the note.

“ ‘ Donny did, Donny didn't! ’ ” Pat laughed, as he poked his head up the companion. “ Who's the girl, you stripling? ”

“ Donny's gittin' to be a lady-killer! ” from Billy.

“ ‘ Et tu, Brute? ’ ” said Don, turning his flushed face to the small boy. “ Didn't think my Commodore would go back on me.”

“ I didn't mean a thing,” the youngster expostulated. “ Honest I didn't, Don.”

“ You solemn little beggar,” Don smiled, as he rumped the boy's yellow head, “ I was just joking with you. You had a right to kid me. The blamed thing is for me; and it's in a lady's handwriting, too. Gee! ”

“ ‘ I sent a letter to my love, ’ ” Pat hummed. “ Open her up, Captain, and see what she says. Oh, you sea-dogs, you sea-

dogs! What a way you have with the ladies!"

"Are you going to let me read this durned note, or are you not?" gruffly from Don, and then, opening the letter, read:

"A mia querida Propiedad :

Be sure to take two eggs, you can obtain them from the 'Chino,' Mow Wow, on the street leading to the American sanitarium, and go with them, with speed, to the house of La Foula Preciosa. She is old and ugly, this Preciosa, but she is a saint, as you will find when she has your two eggs into *pan con huevos turned*. It is the bread of heaven, mio muchacho! and the two eggs will make a big ring of such a size that your little boy of many millions can put it about his waist. The cost is two reales, one peseta.

Is not this a good English letter? My love to la Señora, your mother, when you write, and thank her for giving to me the felicity of knowing her nice boy.

Adios, mia Propiedad! Manuel and myself we wish to you the most jolliest of nice times, you and your good friends. Hasta la vista.

Su amiga,
La Señora de la Presidencia."

“Now, wasn’t that just dandy of her?” Don exclaimed when he had finished reading the note, and the blush on his smooth face had changed to a pleased smile.

“She’s lovely in every way,” Archie agreed, “and I wouldn’t have teased you about that note if I had known it was from Madam Amador. I’d as leave teased you about your own mother.”

“Yes,” Billy interrupted, “my mater says she’s ever so nice—but what about that bread? Let’s fix it up this morning.”

“Which are my sentiments also, Buster, and as ship’s cook I second the motion. The first thing to do is to call Blas and find out where La Foula Preciosa lives.”

“Oh, no, Mr. Archie,” from the Middie. “Leave it to the strategic ability of your Captain. The first thing to do is to find out where that Chink, Mow Wow, hangs out, so we can get the eggs. Gee, isn’t it fun to think of having to buy eggs from one person to take to someone else to make a loaf of bread that only costs ten cents, gold?”

“ You’re right, Captain. Send the First Officer forward to find out the lay of the land from Blas.”

“ That means you, Patsie boy,” said Don, “ so trot.”

Pat went forward and returned almost immediately, with Blas at his heels, both talking at once.

“ What’s up? ” Don asked.

“ Senor Pat says you wish to buy eggs from the store of Mow Wow, sir,” Blas explained, “ and he asks me if I know where is that store. It is a store of the worst kind, and the eggs!—they are older than La Preciosa herself, and she is ninety-two, the Virgin bless her! ” and he crossed himself.

“ Well, we can buy eggs at other places, can’t we, Blas? ” Billy asked.

“ Si, Señorito ! And a place far more suited for El Comandante, though vile enough. All who live in Taboga are pigs! It is different at Otoki, much different! There is another Chino who has a store not far from the little church of Corpus Christi. He has a small place, but he is very rich. He is *called* Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat,

though what his real name is, the good God alone knows! He calls his store 'La Mano del Dios'—'the Hand of God'—for all things are obtainable there."

"Well, we'll get you to show us to the place about half-past nine this morning," said Don. "That's all we want to know right now. Thank you, Blas," and as the boy returned forward he added: "Wonder why he's so keen for us to go to that store?"

"Probably expects a rake off as commission from the Chinaman for bringing us there," Archie answered. "Do you know, I'm not overly fond of our dear friend Blas! But I will say one thing for him, he seems really fond of the Commodore. Still, all Latin-Americans like children—as playthings."

"Better not let Billy hear you call him a plaything," said Don. "Where is he, anyhow?"

"He's below."

"What's he up to?"

"He's putting on a clean, sleeveless undershirt. It's awfully hot, and I can't see why a little chap like him shouldn't wear as few

clothes as he can, so I recommended the aforesaid undershirt, a pair of his duck knickers, and sandals. He's been after me ever since yesterday morning to let him go barefooted, and, as you know, I've let him, like the rest of us, while we're on board, but after what your medical friend told you at Ancon, about children not going barefooted down here, I don't feel it would be right, off the boat, and after all, so long as his legs are bare, and most of his feet, too, what's the difference? Let him use one of your white duck Jackie's caps, will you? "

" You just bet I will, sir! But here he is, and here's Pat. Yay, Blas ! *Venga aqui !* And bring the gig around here. All hands are going ashore, except Smith, and he can row back and wait for us on board till we whistle for him."

The light, round bottomed gig required careful handling as they neared the shore, for the tide was on the ebb, and it took a good deal of skill to steer her among the rocks without harm. Finally, as her nose grated against the sand of the beach, with only a narrow strip of shallow water, not

more than a few inches deep, between her bow and the shore, the boys jumped out and raced up the sandy stretch, to find shade in a thin grove of tamarisks and *lignum vita* trees, a road from which led directly into the village, only a hundred or so yards away, up a rather steep, cobble paved little street, and passed some old stone ruins.

As Don looked at Pat and Archie, and then at himself, he said with a good deal of satisfaction, albeit somewhat shamefacedly:

“Well, we do look like three real, sure ’nough Jackies, don’t we?”

“I don’t know what we look like,” Archie answered, mopping the perspiration from his neck and chest, left bare by the open middie blouse, with its loosely knotted black silk “fore-in-hand,” “but I feel like a broiled live lobster.”

“Speaking of lobsters,” Pat struck in, “reminds me of ‘eats.’ I wonder if we couldn’t get breakfast somewhere in Taboga. It’ll be about eleven o’clock by the time we get those eggs, and look up La Foula. How about it, Blas?”

“La Señora Fiamosa has often taken Americans to board, if you wish to go there, Señor Capitan,” to Don. Blas disliked Pat.

“How about it, Mr. Archie?”

“Right-o! and we’ll now proceed, five strong, to look up the Chino and buy two eggs. Come ahead, boys! Lead the way, Blas!” and off they started up the steep street of the village, and did not stop until they had crossed the little plaza in front of the church and, turning up a little alleyway, so narrow as to let them walk only two abreast, and very steep, with some crooked, broken down wooden steps helping their climb, they came to a small, yellow ochre house, above the open door of which was written in clumsy letters of a strange, dull red, “La Mano del Dios.”

It was stiflingly hot inside, and the smells that assailed one’s nostrils were innumerable—chief among them being the odor of Jamaica rum, black Cuban tobacco, and the heavy, sickeningly sweet pungency of stale opium.

Passing by the two or three little tables that stood about the floor, each of which held

its quota of rough looking men, Archie, his hand on the Commodore's bare shoulder, walked across to the dirty counter, behind which rose a number of shelves filled with everything imaginable, from canned salmon from Sitka, to embroidered slippers from Canton. A spry, skinny Chinaman darted behind the counter:

"Mellicans!" he chattered in a high voice. "Goody boys! Got alla tings here—samee Frisco! Alee glood! Allee chleep, chleep!"

Billy laughed, and even Archie could not help smiling as he said quietly:

"All we want is a couple of fresh eggs, John."

"No sabe eggs," the Chinaman squealed.

"Bueno," said Archie. "Dame dos huevos."

"Goody man," the Asiatic grinned. "Me sabe now. Me got."

At this moment the dark curtain that hung over an opening that evidently let into another room, was pushed wide and there entered another Chinaman. He moved with absolutely no noise, though he was very short and heavy. He had a bland, humorous

old face, and the long, thin, grey mustache that drooped from his lip seemed to balance, in some degree, the long queue that fell down his plump back. He was dressed in dark blue silk, of the pajama-like pattern used by so many of his race, and he was spotlessly clean. In his mouth was a long, thin-stemmed pipe with a tiny bowl.

“Go away, Poy!” he said to his compatriot, and turning to Archie, continued in a soft voice, and in perfect English: “What can I do for you? Poy is a good boy, but——” and he tapped his forehead with one finger, the nail of which was at least an inch long.

“I’d like two eggs, please,” Archie replied with the courtesy he felt it necessary to show in order to match the other’s manner.

“We have some here, but they are not very fresh. Excuse the noise those Spanish pigs make; they mean no harm.”

“Ain’t you got any fresh eggs, Mr. Mandarin Man?” Billy asked, looking up with a friendly little smile at the old fellow. “We wanted to git ’em so we could have some *pan con huevos*.”

For the least fraction of a second the Chinaman's slanting eyes narrowed as he looked at the child, and then he said, with a kindly beam on his fat face:

“I think, if my little Boy Prince wants the eggs, ‘Mr. Mandarin’ will have to supply him. There are six fresh eggs that I was saving to curry for my breakfast to-day. I will gladly give you two.” And he walked to the end of the shelves and reached up, standing on tiptoe and then, still unable to reach what he wanted, making two or three comical little hops.

“It is a curse to be so short and fat!” he said, turning apologetically to his waiting customers. “If the little Prince there will jump on the counter and will reach ‘way up, he can get the eggs; but please do not break them.” And then, after a short sentence to Poy in Chinese, he stood back, while Archie gave Billy his hand and he jumped on to the counter and, stretching one of his slim arms above his head, felt on the shelf for the eggs. Crossed on the soft, damp skin of his armpit, the thin, blue lines of the cut showed clearly. Hardly raising his eyes from the floor, the

Chinaman remained impassive, and then, looking up, he gazed out of the small window over his door, and took a long look at the top of Ancon peak, on which rested the old, black cross. Strange that, for a second, as he looked, the men at the tables became quiet, but almost immediately they resumed their convivial hilarity.

“ But I say, I can’t find any eggs up here,” came Billy’s disappointed voice.

“ None up there? ” from the Chinaman. “ That’s very odd! Poy! ” and again he spoke in his native language. “ Ah! ” he said, with a smile, “ I see! Silly Poy! He moved the eggs, he says, under the counter. I am very sorry. Let me help you down,” and, giving the child one of his fat hands, he helped him to jump to the floor.

“ Here are the eggs,” he said, taking out two and putting them in a clean paper bag. “ One real, please.”

“ Oh, I say, Mr. Mandarin Man! ” said Billy, as he handed him the money. “ Won’t you give us a ‘ come ’shore ’? ”

“ You have been in China, haven’t you? ” the old man laughed. “ I’ve given many a



HE HANDED THE DELIGHTED SMALL BOY A TINY SANDALWOOD BOX.

‘ come ’shore ’ to Americans, over in Hong-Kong. Here is something for you,” and he handed the delighted small boy a tiny sandal-wood box, very beautifully carved.

“ Oh, thank you ever so much ! ” cried Billy.

“ It’s mighty good of you to give it to him,” said Archie, “ but it’s too fine a ‘ come ’shore ’ for two eggs. Better not keep it, Commodore.”

“ But I say, Mr. Archie,” Billy pleaded, “ I do want to keep it, lots.”

“ Please let him keep it, sir,” the old Chinaman asked. “ It’s really not valuable. Thank you for buying the eggs, gentlemen. And try not to forget my little store. My name is Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, but to the little Prince there I am always ‘ Mr. Mandarin.’ ”

CHAPTER X

AT THE SIGN OF THE RED TABLE CLOTH

*“Yon rising moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft, hereafter, rising look for us
Through this same garden—and for One in vain.”*

*“ And when like her, O Saki, you shall pass
Among the guests star-scatter'd on the grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty glass.”*
(—Omar Khayyam.)

*“ Out flew the web and floated wide,
The mirror cracked from side to side,
‘ The curse has come upon me!’ cried
The Lady of Shalott.”*
(—Alfred Tennyson.)

“ What an awful time you fellows took to buy a couple of eggs! ” Don greeted Archie and Billy as they came out of La Mano del Dios, and joined him and Pat, who had been waiting for them outside.

“ Sorry I kept you waiting so long, old man,” Archie answered, “ but there was a mix-up about getting fresh eggs.”

“Looked to me like all sorts of a nice, respectable place, I don’t think!” Pat chimed in.

“Pretty tough,” the tutor admitted, “and I believe in my soul that Blas lied about Mow Wow’s place being worse. You know very well that Madam Amador wouldn’t have told us to go to a joint like that. It reminded me of Prosper Merrimée’s account of Lillas Pastia’s wine shop, and, honestly, I felt like Browning’s priest—

‘Caught in an alley’s end,
Where sportive ladies leave their
doors ajar!’

Good Lord! I forgot about my Commodore! I didn’t mean to say that, youngster. Did Blas tell you boys how to get to Señora Fiamosa’s place, Don?”

“He did. You couldn’t have had directions more easy to follow. He said to follow the street that leads south from the Plaza del Corpus Christi, and there’s only one street going south, until we came to the house of La Foula Preciosa. Said the street butt spang against it, and then turned at right angles.”

“ But what’s all that got to do with Madam Fiamosa’s place? ”

“ Why, in that artless little Spanish way of his, he told us that the old lady would tell us how to find Madam Fiamosa’s house.”

“ Of all the fool, indirect instructions! ” Archie exploded. Then he laughed. “ But it’s just like Blas! ” and they all walked across the Plaza, and followed the little street which, sure enough, led them to the door of La Preciosa.

“ The Precious One ” was sitting outside her house decked in a dirty *camison*, which slipped off her skinny shoulders with a coquetry more suggestive of sixteen than ninety-two. She must have had light hair once upon a time, judging from her title of “ La Foula ” (the Blonde), but it was now grey and it, and the aforementioned *camison* constituted the major part of her costume. So scanty was it, in fact, that the two half grown boys—Don and Pat—blushed up to their hair, and Archie chuckled delightedly at their show of modesty.

“ I say, ain’t she ugly? ” Billy whispered.
“ But maybe that ain’t her.”

The old woman held a well worn rosary in one hand and in the other she wielded a short, wooden handled whip with a long, broad leather lash, with which she waged an almost continuous war on some thin, hungry looking goats, filling in her spare time in prayers. So completely engrossed was she in this that she paid no attention to the four strangers for some time, so at last Archie spoke to her in Spanish:

“Buenos dias, Mamita !” he said, taking off his cap. “Madam Amador, over in Panama, told us to come to you and beg you to make us some *pan con huevos*. See, here are the eggs.”

“La Senora is an angel, and may our Blessed Lady be good to her. *Devil!*” this last to one of the goats, “come away from that door! It is you, you wicked Amorosa!” giving “the Love” a whack across its back with her whip. “I am honored, Senor, to make my poor egg bread for you. Leave but—Dear God! look at Hermosita! Almost in my house!” and she leaned forward quickly, and clubbed “the little Beautiful” over the head with the handle of her weapon. “Let

me beg a thousand pardons, Señor. The goats are possessed of devils! What I started to say was that if you will leave the eggs and the *peseta* with me, you shall have the bread in the morning. Heaven bless the beautiful little boy! Only look at him!" and she began to laugh shrilly as she pointed to Billy, who, encouraged by Pat, had jumped on the back of the offending Amorosa, and was riding that astonished animal.

"Viva el picador!" Don laughed. How about it, Mamita?" All of us thank you ever so much for the *pan con huevos*. I bet you hats it'll be dandy!"

"You are a nice boy, and so is the big fellow," La Preciosa smiled. "Therefore I shall put in some *cabanga* with the bread. And my grand-daughter, Ezabelita, shall make it."

"What's it like, Mamita?" the Middie asked, smiling down, quite gently, at the hideous old woman.

"It is made of cocoanut, piñas (pine-apples), and brown sugar, and it is very sweet. As long as you have a piece of it left, you pretty boy, you will still have love in

your heart for the girl who gives it to you. I will tell Ezabelita to make a piece of the largest size for you, and it is so sweet that you can only eat it slowly. Good-bye, all of you."

Pat, a deep pink under his tan, was the last to leave the little house in the calle del Toro, and why?—oh, well, the others only knew it some time afterwards, but if the truth is to be known, I must tell you that while La Foula was chattering with Don and Archie, the English school-boy, shy as a girl, was making little holes in the ground with the toe of one shoe, blushing all the while, and yet his dark eyes were laughing, if a bit bashfully, as he chatted softly with the little Ezabelita, who had placed in one of his warm hands a big piece of the aforesaid *cabanga*, which, she informed him quite coolly, she had intended sending him by Blas, having 'made friends' with him—her own words—all the afternoon before, by watching him on the deck of the "Sapalo," from a certain rock near the top of Moro where she often went, so she said, to think, and to look out on the sea; after which, without even enough

spunk to look up, young Pat muttered a rather gruff "Thank you, ever so!" and then raced after his companions, rather elated by the feeling that the small girl was watching his husky back until he turned out of sight.

After leaving La Foula Preciosa, the four friends remembered that they had not found out where Señora Fiamosa lived, but the very first person they asked showed them to her house, which was just at the junction of the cobbled street and the sandy road that led up to the old French sanitarium, now owned by the United States.

Madam received them effusively, and told them that Blas had already told her of their coming. In spite of the cordiality of her welcome, however, the good lady was very careful to collect and pocket one *peso* silver (fifty cents gold) from each, and then she led the way, swimmingly, into the dining-room, where breakfast was waiting.

The room had a dirt floor, and benches surrounded the table in lieu of chairs. The most conspicuous thing in the place was the

bright, turkey red table cloth, which made up in brilliancy whatever it lacked in cleanliness.

The first course for breakfast was a breaded filet, which la Señora said was veal, but as Archie had noticed a pile of iguanas in the side yard, he and the others passed it by, so that they ate the rest of the meal, steaming bowls of *san cocho* (a sort of Brunswick stew, made with chicken and corn on the cob) with great relish.

“ I wonder if she’d get mad if I asked for some more? ” said Pat. “ Ask her, please, Mr. Archie.”

La Señora said she was delighted, and that the *san cocho* was eternally honored, and she bustled out of the room for more. Unfortunately for the peace of mind, or I should say the peace of stomach, of the four friends, she left the door leading into the kitchen open, and so they beheld the cook, an aged female of the Preciosa type, stirring the pot of *san cocho* with a teaspoon, her brown, skinny arm up to the elbow in it.

“ The curly headed American boy in there,” La Senora said, “ wishes more.” whereupon the decrepit functionary drew her

arm out of the pot and, as it was well coated with vegetables and hers was a truly frugal nature, she proceeded to carefully scrape them back into the stew with the aid of the teaspoon.

“That’s enough for me!” gasped the Commodore. “Let’s go!” and they all fled from the house.

“But they are droll, these Americans!” cried La Senora, as she looked after them. “Ah, well! praised be the saints! they paid.” And she returned to the kitchen.

“Never again!” said Pat, as they got into the gig and put off for the Sapalo. “The sign of the red table cloth never sees this boy any more!”

“Same here!” from the others, and then, after a pause, Archie added:

“Well, we’ll have to eat on board all the time, I guess, which means that Buster and I will have to pay another visit to ‘Mr. Mandarin.’”

* * * * *

Late that night Archie, who was a light sleeper, was aroused by hearing someone sobbing and, naturally, thinking of Billy, he

slipped over to his bunk, but found the small boy sleeping soundly, so he moved toward the other side of the cabin where Don and Pat slept, and, as he softly walked toward their bunks, he heard the sobbing more clearly, and it undoubtedly came from on deck. Treading quietly in his bare feet, he slipped up the companion, and, once on deck, he found, greatly to his surprise, the Bishop's son, huddled close to the wheel, his back to the little brass ship's clock. In his soft, baggy, white pajamas he looked like some sturdy, heartbroken young Pierrot. In his arms was clasped his rare, old Cremona, and his fluffy, dark head was bent over it, one tear-wet, tanned cheek pressed close against it.

"Why, Pat!" Archie exclaimed, and then, with the wonderful gentleness that one sees shown, not unoften, from one man to another in moments of real distress, he sat down by him and passed one of his big arms around the crying boy.

"What is it, son?" he asked. "What is it?"

With his right hand the youngster dashed away the tears from his eyes, still holding his beloved violin tightly.

“ I couldn’t sleep,” he spoke quietly now, “ it—it was so awful hot in our cabin—and so I thought I’d just slip up on deck and—play a little—real easy, so as not to wake you fellows. Well, I—I got out on deck and played the first thing that came into my head—that thing of Grieg’s from the Peer Gynt suite, you know, Asa’s Tod—and—and—just when I’d played a little, the c-clock here tinkled out ‘ eight bells ’—and so I stopped to listen—and when it was all still again I drew my bow across the G string—and—and—Oh, my God! my violin cracked the whole length of the sounding board! It’s just like it was dead!” and he burst out crying again.

“ Steady, old man!” the tutor said quietly, but Pat interrupted him:

“ Paganini played on it when it was new,” he said between his sobs, “ an’ Elman played on it last year, over in London, an’ he liked it ever so—but, oh, Archie! I—I *loved* it!”

CHAPTER XI

“ YON RISING MOON ”

*“ Of ships, and sails, and sealing wax,
Of cabbages and kings.
Of why the sea is boiling hot,
And whether pigs have wings.”
(—Lewis Carroll.)*

By the time that Archie had got breakfast ready the next morning, Pat had regained his good spirits, and while the ‘ ship’s cook ’ took his siesta, the three boys loafed for a while, watching the burning disk of the noon-day sun disappear behind the thick, grey clouds which heralded the oncoming of the regular afternoon rain storm. Looking across the still, peaceful expanse of the ocean, toward the mountainous line of the coast, they could see that it was already raining in Panama city, and a few minutes later the first drops began to fall softly on the canvas deck awning. With the rain came a delightfully cool breeze.

“ Whew! ” Pat exclaimed. “ It don’t rain down here, does it, Don? The sky just opens



and the water tumbles out. I wish it was the dry season! We ain't got on much at present, except our skins, but for all that I guess we'll stay on board."

"That's right!" Don answered. "You and I were going to climb to the top of Moro this afternoon, weren't we? Well, maybe it'll clear off this afternoon."

"Not it—not till about four o'clock, like it always does. I say, what'll we do? It's no end dull."

"I'll get out my trusty banjo, and make our Commodore sing 'Kulla-lo-lo,' like the fair Supi-yaw-lat, Kipling's Mandalay girl, you know. How about it, Commodore?"

"Right-o! Unless we'll wake up Mr. Archie," Billy answered.

"That's a fact," Pat agreed. "Well, we've just got to do something. This is rotten. Chuck me that book, Commodore; over there by Mr. Archie. Let's see what he's been reading. That's it!" and, opening the book at random, he read with much gravity:

" 'O Sorrow!

Why dost borrow



The lustrous passion from a falcon eye?

To give the glow worm light,

Or, on a moonless night,

To tinge, on siren shores, the salt sea
spray?

O Sorrow!

Why dost borrow,

The mellow——’ ”

“ If you fellows are goin’ to read that stuff,” said Billy, “ I’m going forward an’ read a *real* book.” And he dived between decks, returning promptly with a well worn copy of “ Two Little Savages,” a book that he adored, and looking reproachfully at the laughing Pat, he walked to the bow.

“ What’d you want to drive the poor little chap away for? ” Don asked in surprise.

“ I did it on purpose. I wanted to ask you something.”

“ What? ”

“ Why, where on earth did our Commadore get that bluish-black cross on his arm-pit? I noticed it a couple of mornings ago while we were drying off after our swim, and he was naked. Have you seen it? ”

“Why, yes,” Don replied, “I have. I thought it had been there a long time.”

“Well, it hasn’t. Tell you how I know. He was my ‘fag’ last half at Eton, and in warm weather we used to go in swimming a lot, in the Thames, and so I’ve seen him stripped lots of times, and I’m sure I’d have noticed it.”

“Why don’t you ask Mr. Archie about it?”

“Uh-uh! He’s just the best sort ever unless he thinks there’s something wrong with Billy, but then he’s right up in the air!” and with a wriggle of delight he continued: “I say, it’s sort of creepy, ain’t it, Captain?”

Don laughed.

“You crazy old curly-head, you!” he said affectionately. “I believe you’d get fun out of a funeral.”

“Why, sure, I would,” Pat grinned, wagging his finger at Don. On it was a very handsome, rather massive, gold seal ring.

“While we’re asking each other questions, my little Petrel,” said Don, “tell me something. Is that gold collar you wear on your finger an heirloom, or what?”

Pat heaved a prodigious sigh and then an impish twinkle came into his dark eyes, as he said, with an attempt at gentle melancholy:

“ Ah! Donny, you mustn’t ask me that! Never since the night that that ring was placed on my finger by the hand of the peerless East Indian princess Kokosneezix, has it been off for one instant, and——”

“ Aw, go sit on a tack! ” said Don, a little irritated. “ What about the blamed old thing, anyhow? ”

“ Well, honest Injun, Don,” Pat said, laughingly, “ that ring was given me by the Pater, when I was thirteen years old, and it’s the nicest ring you ’most ever saw. That’s the truth. ’Pon honor, it is.”

“ What’s the truth, you two youthful magpies? ” called Archie, in a sleepy voice, and at its sound Billy gave a whoop and ran aft and, jumping astride the young man’s broad chest, began to pummel him, emitting ecstatic squeals, for at least once a day he and his tutor had what he called “ a rough-house,” and he greatly enjoyed it.

The rest of the afternoon passed rather slowly, for Pat, possibly for fear of encoun-

tering Ezabelita and her sea-gazing habits, positively refused to climb the Moro with Don, as they had first planned. After dinner, however, as they all sat on deck, he conceived a brilliant idea, again doubtless traceable to the gazing of La Foula's romantic grand-daughter upon the boys of the "Sapalo":

"I say, Mr. Archie," he said, "let's row over to Ancon cove about ten o'clock, and take a moonlight swim. It'll be rippin' over there, and—and I don't like bathin' over here so much," with a blush.

"Good idea, Pat," the tutor agreed, "but we'll get some sail on her, and go over in the sloop, if the Captain is willing."

"Oh, quit kiddin', Mr. Archie!" Don smiled. "Sure we'll go."

"But what about me?" Billy queried. "That's awful late, ain't it?"

"Yes," Archie admitted thoughtfully, "it is. Let me see. I tell you what! You splash around till you get tired, and then I'll get on board with you and keep you company while you go to sleep."

“ We’ll take turns keeping him company,” Pat said, “ and if any bugaboo so much as shows his nose at the port hole, I’ll use some of our firearms on him—they don’t seem to be of much use for anything else.”

By half-past seven the “ Sapalo ” had been gotten under way, and after a series of most elaborately wearisome tacks, she dropped anchor off the cove.

The moon sent a long shimmer of silver pathway over the ripples, and softened everything, even the grim, jagged pieces of rock that lay along the bottom of Ancon. As the four boys rowed shoreward, they noticed how its pale light lay, like a mantle of silver tissue, over the bare, crushed ribs of an old wreck that had found a resting place high up on the beach. Looking seaward, the white hull of the “ Sapalo ” danced easily on the water with the grace of a gull, her slender mast showing like a slim shaft of pale gold.

“ Yay, Billikin! ” called Pat, as he stripped off and swam up to the small boy,

“ ‘ I would see the monstrous shark ’—
Gee-runch-up!

‘ I would hear the dog-fish bark ’—
Bow-wow ! ”

Billy laughed and then disappeared under the water suddenly, reaching up a thin arm and ducking the Bishop’s son.

“ Pat,” Archie called, as he swam toward the two boys, “ you’re crazier than ever—but for all that you deserve a vote of thanks for suggesting this swim. This beats splashing off Moro all hollow. Come ahead! the Commodore and I’ll have a water battle against you and Don. Are you on? ”

“ Never say die! ” Pat flung back cheerfully. “ Come on here, Don, and help me lick these two! ‘ England expects every man to do her duty,’ you know.”

After the battle, in which the big tutor and Billy came out victors, they all swam in shore and lay on the sand for a while, and then went in again.

“ I wonder what time it is? ” said Archie. “ It’s getting late, for the moon’s going down; and I can see the top star of the Southern Cross just peeping over the top of Ancon.” Then, to Billy, he added: “ Tired, old fellow? ”

“Y-yes, sir!” Billy answered, drowsily.

“Well, I’ll take you over to the boat. Come ahead.”

“Let’s swim over, will you?” Billy begged.

“Sure—just whatever my Commodore wants. Rest your hand on my shoulder, and I’ll tow you over,” and with the boy’s sun-browned paw resting on his smooth shoulder, Archie struck out.

Don and Pat continued to frolic for a while in the water, till finally a bellow from the sloop attracted their attention.

“Say, you two!” came Archie’s voice. “Do you know it’s getting late? Seven bells just struck as I came on board.”

“Does that mean for us to come on board?” Pat bawled back. “I don’t care if I do! I’m awfully tired. I’ll swim over. Come ahead, Don.”

“Not just this minute, Patsie,” Don pleaded. “Just five minutes more fun.”

Pat swam off alone, and as he pulled himself out of the water and on deck, he said to Archie :

“ The Captain won’t come. Tell you what. I’ll stay with our Commodore if you want to join him in a final splash.”

“ You won’t mind? ” Archie hesitated. “ Well, then, I’ll just dive in and swim around with Don for a while longer. So long! ” and over the side he went.

CHAPTER XII

EIGHT BELLS

*“ Last night the Queen had four Marys,
To-night she’ll hae but three—
There was Mary Seaton, and Mary Beaton,
And Mary Carmachel, and me.”*
(—Old Ballad, from Oxford Book of
English Verse.)

*“I flung me round him,
I drew him under,
I clung, I bound him,
My own white wonder.”*
(—Rodin Noel.)

After Archie had rejoined Don, who met him about fifty yards from shore, and they had splashed about in the cool water for a little while, they once more swam to shallow water and waded in to where the little white gig, the “Kitten,” was beached.

“Listen!” said Don, as he threw himself down by the tutor’s side.

Softly from out of the night came the sound of oars, and the voices of men singing. It was a riotous sea song, but the distance

added charm to it. Now and then a drunken laugh was audible.

"Some of those half-drunken Spanish riffraff, I suppose!" said Archie, "and yet, somehow or other, it all blends in, doesn't it?"

"Yes," Don whispered, "it sounds as if they were in that choppy little channel right south of Ancon, between Taboga and Urivá."

"Then I think we'd just as well row over to the 'Sapalo,' Don. Listen!"

The song came clearer, the voices, some hoarse and rough, some sweet, but the whole effect one of the most wanton debauchery:

"Oh, our Captain was a Devil,
And our ship one bloody Hell—
Heave lads, heave her up, as all around
the capstan go!"

The next moment two pangas and a cayuca came out of the dark shadows of the point, and made rapidly for the little sloop.

"Quick, Don!" cried Archie, as he seized the stern of the gig in his hands. "Take the other side of her and push off! Oh, God! why didn't I stay on board?"

With Don grabbing hold of the other side of the stern, they pushed the "Kitten" into the water, and jumped aboard. Archie took the oars, and the Midshipman sat in the stern sheets. They had only gone a few yards when the sharp crack of a revolver was heard, followed by a shrill, blood-strangled sob.

"Row faster, Archie!" called the boy in the stern sheets quietly, and then: "Look! Oh, my God, man, look!"

The tutor, turning his head, looked, and what he saw made his face ghastly. Over the side of the "Sapalo" a crowd of men had clambered, and were breaking in the closed hatch. Half way submerged in the sea, half sprawling over the gunwale, was the body of a man, evidently dead. Suddenly the hatch was lifted from below, and again came the sharp report of a pistol, to be followed by another screech of pain, and a moment later the stocky form of the British boy was seen to make a dart for the deck, Billy, looking small and still sleep tousled in his pajamas, close to him, Pat's left arm around him. As they gained the deck, the

boy fired two more shots and then began backing for the masthead.

“I can keep ’em here for a little while, Commodore,” he said. “Run for the mast and climb it. Don’t you be scared! See how they are all crowded, there in the stern? I’ve got ’em covered. What’s that? Think you ought to stay with me? Oh, thanks awfully, but indeed you mustn’t, Bill. I’ll follow you just as soon as you’re up. Hurry!”

The small boy scuttled up the mast to the crosstrees, and Pat, still backing, followed him. It was impossible for him to keep his revolver covering the men and to climb at the same time, so, tossing the empty gun overboard, he went up the rigging like a cat.

“Don’t believe there’s a gun among ’em!” he panted. “Only cutlasses.”

The cayuca had now come alongside, and the one man in it climbed to the deck. It was ‘Mr. Mandarin’!

“You pigs!” he cried angrily to the huddled group. “You cowards! Afraid of a fifteen year old child!” and he ran to the mast and, with a really uncanny agility for a man of his great fatness, began to climb

up, a long, thin bladed knife between his teeth.

“I’ll kill you if you come higher!” Pat said desperately, as he drew his other gun, which had been thrust in the cord of Billy’s pajamas.

“Oh, Pat!” the small boy screamed, from his place just above him. “Look!”

The Bishop’s son turned just in time to see the thin Chinaman, Poy, aiming at him with a rifle he had found in the cabin, and so, pointing his revolver at the weasel faced creature, he fired, the bullet leaving an unrecognizable mass of crushed and bloody flesh in its wake. At the same instant, the boy felt a sudden, sharp pain in his side, and toppled over into the arms of the fat Chinaman, blood spurting from a gash he had received in his thigh, and Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat’s yellow fingers closed for a second in his firm flesh, and then, after a very calm survey of the wound, the old man smiles, quite gently, chokes the lad for a few seconds, nods his head, and flings him overboard, where, with a sound between a sob and a scream, the boy sinks, one brown arm

clutching high above the water, at the air, even after the poor curly head has disappeared, and on a finger of the tough young hand there flashes, for a second, the heavy, gold seal ring, which, noticing for the first time, the old man makes a skillful grab for, and wrings off the boy's hand before he disappears.

At the same instant, clear, bright, and beautiful, rises the Southern Cross over the mountain top where stands that other cross, so old and grim. The Chinaman, with a sudden yell, rises to his feet, and snatching the pale, sobbing little Commodore in his arms, he tears off his pajamas, and lifting the slight, naked figure on his shoulder, roughly drags the boy's arm high above his yellow head. On the armpit is also a cross! The ship's clock sounds eight bells.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PRISONERS

*“ By the brand upon my shoulder, by the gall of
clinging steel,
By the welts the whips have left me, by the scars
that never heal.”*

(—Rudyard Kipling.)

As soon as the Midshipman and his friend had seen poor Pat come from the cabin, they had started with their utmost speed to row the gig toward the blood stained sloop. Archie, putting all his strength into his oar strokes, sent the “Kitten” skimming over the water, while Don, quiet and white, held her close on her course. When they were about a hundred yards from ‘the Sapalo,’ there came the sharp, snapping “whit” of a rifle, followed by the ‘zip’ of a bullet, as it passed over their bows, and flattened itself against the rocky wall, on the south side of the cove.

“Slow up, Archie!” Don cautioned, and then added in a husky voice: “They’ve killed Pat, I guess; don’t let ’em kill you.”

“What difference will it make?” the man asked bitterly. “I was in charge of you boys, and now—”

“Yes,” Don spoke crisply, “that’s so; but don’t forget that you’re still in charge of us—and there’s our Commodore. Ah!”

It was not an ordinary exclamation, but something between surprise and intense pain. Now at last Archie stopped his rowing:

“What’s the matter, Don?” he asked quickly.

Don, his body still glistening from the sea bath, had clapped his hand to his white shoulder, and through his fingers oozed dark drops of blood.

“They got me! In the shoulder!” he said weakly. “But row man, row!” and then, with a sob, “But oh, dear God! What are we to do?”

Coming toward them from both sides, were the two pangas, closing in rapidly. In each were four men, two rowing, and two armed with machetes. As they drew closer, Archie stood up, balancing himself easily with the firm set of his bare feet. Never had the low sinking, tropic moon looked on a

more spirited sight than now, as he stood, stalwart and menacing, a heavy oar in his hand, the perfection of his athletic, wonderfully muscled body, a model of clean, young manhood; on his usually cheerful, good-looking face the greyish white hue of desperation; while the frown between his eyebrows, and the burning anger and hate in his blue eyes, made him appear like some avenging angel. Just as one of the pangas drew along side, he struck with all his force, crushing in the head of the sailor in the bow as easily as if it had been an eggshell. As he raised the oar for another blow the heavy blade of a machete struck him a glancing blow across his right breast, and a spurt of blood ran down his body. At the same instant he felt a sudden jar as the other panga bore down and rammed them, crushing 'the Kitten's' sides, and striking him on both bare legs, throwing him on his face, his head in Don's lap, and, as the little boat filled and sank, he lost consciousness.

He was aroused a little while later by the cranking of a light chain and, after what seemed to him ages, he became conscious of a

pain in his breast and both legs. He was by no means the type of young fellow to cry out from physical suffering, but he was still somewhat stunned and so the pain, added to the choking, oppressive heat, and a feeling of distressing thirst, made him moan.

“Bad as all that, is it, old man?” came Don’s pleasant voice out of the shadows.

“Did I grunt, Captain?” Archie asked. “I didn’t mean to. I’ve—I’ve been asleep, or something. Where are we? And how long have we been here?”

“Sh-sh!” the Middie whispered. “Talk low, or you’ll wake our Commodore. We’re on board the Sapalo, in what we used to call the fo’castle, up forward, you know. Don’t you recognize that small, cadet lantern, swinging by the companion? As to where we are, I can’t tell you exactly, because—” here his voice began to shake a little, and a hot flush of shame came to his face. “After we’d headed about half a mile toward Tabogilla, and had gone about, just filling on our new tack to make the channel between Taboga and Uriva, they began to—to—Oh, Well! they gave me a licking—and the whip

was—was just like the one La Preciosa used on poor Hermosita!” he added with a wry, little smile.

“The devil!” cried Archie, and the next moment he remembered Don’s caution about talking softly, but it was too late, for a childish voice spoke close to his side. It was the Commodore, but oh! such a white, sad faced, little Commodore! so different from the mischievous small boy of that morning!

“Oh, I say, Mr. Archie!” he said, and then laying his head on his tutor’s lap, he burst out crying: “I ain’t been asleep!” he sobbed. “But I tried, ’cause Don said you’d like me to. He’s been no end good to me, Don has, and oh! they—they wouldn’t let me go to him when they threw him on board, and he was all bloody. An’ one of ’em kicked you—an’ Don hit him—an’ then—they licked him—an’—an’—”

Archie drew the small boy close to him, and the sobbing finally became less heart breaking. Brushing the stiff, yellow hair from the boy’s damp forehead, he looked down at him tenderly:

“Remember last year, when you were so sick, Billy-boy?” he said, “And you wouldn’t go to sleep until I’d sing to you? My, what a bad boy you were ! Acted like you were five! Let’s pretend we’re home now. There’s the brigade of tin soldiers over on the table—close your eyes and you’ll see ’em—and there’s Simkins—isn’t he a funny, old Teddy-bear?—he’s already asleep, like his little master ought to be! And I say, Commodore, if it wasn’t so dark I bet you could see that new tennis racquet I got you; and the cricket bat, and the snowshoes, and the skiis, and all—yes, and there’s——”

“But you’re not singin,’ ” the sleepy small boy protested. “You said you’d sing!”

“Sing what? Solvig’s song? Like I did last—like I always do, I mean?” and the low voice began to croon softly:

“ ‘ Sleep, thou darling boy of mine,
I will cradle thee, I will watch thee.

The boy is lying on his mother’s heart
They two have been playing all the life
day long.

The boy has been resting in his mother's
arms,
All the life day long—God's blessing on
my joy! ' "

The water lapped the sides of the sloop softly, and the warm breath of the night enfolded all the small boy's unhappiness in a tender drowsiness. He was on the cricket field at Eton, fielding for Pat, and the rooks were cawing among the elms in the 'little yard,' and the 'Head' was crossing the close, his gown gathered about him as he always did, and, from the Thames came the boyish voices of the fellows in their sculls, training for the race with Harrow, and singing their "Jolly Boating Weather," or no, it wasn't that, either, it was—and the low voice continued:

" ' Sleep, thou darling boy of mine,
I will cradle thee, I will watch thee.' "

CHAPTER XIV

THE PIRATE BOY.

*“ Swifter, and yet more swift,
Till the heart with a mighty lift
Makes the lungs laugh, the throat cry—
‘ Oh, bird see, see bird, I fly.’ ”*

*“ Is this, is this your joy?
Oh bird, then I, though a boy,
For a golden moment share
Your feathery life in air.’ ”*
(—Henry Charles Beeching.)

After the little boy had gone to sleep, Archie, looking over toward Don, saw, with a mixture of gratification and loneliness, that the Middie had curled himself up and was also sleeping, his hurt shoulder bound in a bandage. Archie did not know that the boy had stayed awake all the time that he had been unconscious, watching him like a younger brother, and also comforting Billy. As he sat watching the two sleepers, the Middie looking almost as childish now as the younger lad, in the care-forgetting, heart-comforting sleep of boyhood, a bright light appeared

at the head of the companion, and, with the firm, though noiseless tread peculiar to him, Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat came into the fo'castle, an electric flashlight in one hand.

"The little boy sleeping" he asked in his soft voice, looking at the small body that Archie held in his arms. He spoke quite placidly, as if nothing had happened, and the tutor, controlling his desire to try to kill him, answered in the same way:

"Yes, he's asleep; poor, little chap."

"And the big boy?" pointing at Don.

"Asleep also."

"The best thing for both of them, particularly as you and I are now more or less free to talk. In the first place, I want to assure you that, so far as possible, I do not wish to hurt any of you—mind, I say so far as possible. Of course, if there is any show of resistance, like that half-grown boy displayed a while ago, you will get the same thing—a beating, and if necessary, death, like the curly headed boy. As to the little Prince, he is a handsome little fellow, and more husky than I thought him, and in about a year—how old is he?"

“Ten,” Archie answered in a low voice, holding the small, quiet body close to him as he looked down sadly at the softly smiling young face, with its few cheerful freckles.

“As I thought. Well, in about a year, maybe two, I will send him to a friend of mine who has the bad taste to live in Japan, near Yokahama.”

“You’ll do *what?*” the young fellow cried, his voice for once sounding strangely scared. “I thought you intended holding him for ransom—you’d get a lot you know, up to almost half of what his grandfather has. Think, man!”

“You Occidentals are all alike! You talk in millions, but you think in cents. I don’t want ‘almost half’ of the old man’s money; I want all of it, down to the last ‘yen.’ And my friend wants just such a boy, and that will mean more money, don’t you see?” and the fat old fellow chuckled pleasantly. “You and I will spend a few years together in each other’s company,” he continued blandly, “which can be made quite pleasant, (for you are, if you will pardon me, a good looking young fellow, who must be entertaining, even

though it be in a rather boyish way), or very nasty, if you sulk, or try anything absurd, for I can be quite disagreeable when I have to be—your friend's naked back there is a good enough illustration, I dare say. By the way, he's a Midshipman, or something like that?"

"He's a second classman at the United States Naval Academy."

"Well and good! I saw some white uniforms in the aft cabin that must have been his, they were too small for that big body of yours. Well, after about a month, I'll send him back to the States, on promise to tell nothing of what has happened. He is to say that the "Sapalo"—a very nice, little ship, by the way, but badly crowded, just now, with the Spanish swine!—was wrecked, and all were drowned except himself. If he ever tells a different tale, I will know of it, depend on that, and I will take it out on the little boy—and a lad of ten, even though he is rather a solid little husky, bears pain so badly! Everything hurts him more than it would you or I. You can explain all this to the boys; you will do it better than I—and be

sure to let the Midshipman know that if he tells, you will see the small boy when he is crucified. These Spanish fools would doubtless prefer an 'auto da fe,' but I do not; they are so much more messy. Good morning! Do try to rest a little, my dear sir. Believe me, you really need it. I hope I bound up your wound satisfactorily? It isn't at all deep, I am glad to say." And he started to ascend the companion. Half way up he paused, and, turning, said quite pleasantly: "It is just daybreak. If you find you cannot rest down here, suppose you come on deck when the little Prince wakes. It is very rough, and we've made poor headway. You'll help us, I'm sure," with a gracious smile, and he disappeared.

After the Chinaman had gone, Archie, for the first time since he had been a boy, bent his curly, yellow head on his arm and began to cry, the deep sobs of a heartbroken young fellow, desperate and frightened for the safety of someone he loves better than himself, and whom he feels he is powerless to assist. When the two boys woke, he told them they could all go on deck, and so,

dressed in some of their own clothes that the Chinaman had sent forward, they went up. No one noticed them at first, except Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, who apparently saw everything, and who smiled at them genially and waved one plump hand, after which he continued to attend to the business before him.

While he had been below talking to Archie, one of the Spanish sailors had broached a small barrel of rum, three of which had somehow been loaded on board, and from the free libations in which a bit of bacchanalian sportiveness resulted, terminated in chaos. Not that the whole crew was drunk—though Archie wished most devoutly that they were—but those who were sober resented the intoxication of their more fortunate comrades, with the result that a very bedlam had broken loose, and the seaman at the wheel, though he stuck to his duty, laughed gleefully, and threw out jibes with great gusto. The wind had risen to a gale, and the “Sapalo” was running before it under a heavy press of canvass, her decks aslant until the port gunwale was almost under water. A mile or so

to starboard the grey sea was being lashed to smoothness by sheets of tropic rain, but the ocean heaved in long, gigantic swells about the white hull of the sloop. The helmsman, a lad of fourteen or fifteen, his sturdy legs bared half way to his thighs, stood, feet wide spread, the salty wind blowing in his handsome, saucy face. His high rolled trousers were of dirty khaki, cut sailor fashion, and he had on an equally dirty, Canton crepe undershirt, thrown open so that the smooth, tanned skin of his breast showed clean in contrast. His forearms were also sun-browned, but his upper arms and shoulders, like his chest, were a much paler tan, showing him to be one of those youngsters who are naturally thick skinned. His stockily built body somehow suggested the poor, bright faced son of the Lord Bishop of the Bahamas, though he was shorter than Pat, but his face was totally different, except for the mischievous impishness that they possessed in common. On the side of the well shaped young head, with its thatch of rumpled brown hair, was a red and white striped Neapolitan fisher's cap, its tassel

hanging rakishly over one ear, and the healthy, blossomy young face that it framed, with its queer, laughing grey eyes looking back at you squarely, the snubbed nose sniffing the sea like an alert little watch dog, the wide, red lipped mouth parted over the white teeth in a smile of boyish joyousness, was good to see. Round his rather heavy waist was a sash of crimson *jusi* cloth, through which was stuck a heavy bladed, bone handled machete.

The hubbub on board increased until the sailor who had first broached the rum barrel straddled it and, a knife in each hand, dared the Chinaman to come on. A moment later the knives were sent spinning overboard, and seizing the drunk creature around the waist, the old Asiatic sent him after them, and the rum barrel after all three. Then he turned to the others:

“See, my children,” he said blandly, “there goes your shipmate, José ! My eyes are not so good as they used to be, I am an old man, you know, but if I’m not mistaken, I see a school of sharks. Since they are Spanish sharks, if they find the rum barrel

first, they will doubtless get very drunk; but if they find José first, they will eat, and drink afterwards.” Then, his voice changing to a harsh command: “Stand by to take in sail, fools! Tom,” to the lad at the wheel, “put her hard down. That’s it. There’s the island. It’s time we made it, too. This storm is bad. Now, sing Boyito! We’ve made a good catch, and we’re almost in harbor,” and Tom began to sing in a powerful mezzo-soprano, the others joining in, till the roaring of the song and the howling of the wind, added to the angry booming waves on the coast they were approaching, seemed like some fantastic dream. Tom’s voice seemed strangely out of place, more like a mischievous young chorister-boy, leading a chorus of buccaneers in an amateur comic opera, than one of a band of marauders:

“ Oh, our Captain was a Devil,
And our ship one bloody Hell—
Heave lads, heave her up, as all around
the capstan go.

Sing a deep sea chantey,
As did Blackbeard and Cervante,
Work aboard the Hell in life, we'll
also work in Hell below!"

CHAPTER XV

“SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT”

*“ But oft, from the Indian hunter’s camp,
This lover and maid so true
Are seen at the hour of midnight damp
To cross the Lake by a firefly’s lamp
And paddle their white canoe! ”*
(—Sir Thomas Moore.)

And what of Pat Dean, son of the Lord Bishop of the Bahamas?

Well, with the din and the horror of the fight at the cove in his ears, and the warm gush of blood from his thigh, he had mercifully lost consciousness, and the helpless clutchings of his poor hand as he sank had been quite involuntary, just as the wise old Chinaman had figured, for that placid old gentleman was far too thorough in his methods to have left him unless quite sure of his drowning. If the boy’s body was never found, so much the better; and if it was washed ashore, and found by some of the few Americans who, at that time, were beginning to make short trips from the main-

land to stay at the old French sanitarium, and who sometimes used the cove for swimming, why no harm would be done, for the gash was, as you know, in Pat's thigh, and though deep, gave no hint of foul play, as would have been the case had the lad been stabbed in some vital organ. Still, as Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat shrewdly figured, the shock the boy had undergone, added to the tremendous amount of blood he would lose, would render him far too weak to let him swim, husky though he was, so that drown he most certainly would. Altogether, since the old fellow was, at the moment when he had choked Pat and flung him overboard, quite busy dealing with the struggling little Commodore, seeing to the disposal of Archie and the Midshipman, and holding his riotous crew in check, he felt that he had followed the wisest course where the Bishop's son was concerned. His one regret was that Pat's heavy gold ring was now on his own finger, for he felt that it might have been better if the youngster's body was found with the ring still on his hand.

The Chinaman's calculations were really almost perfect in this instance, but not quite, and, as is so often the case, a very tiny thing changed them, nothing more nor less than a small, tin box, containing a square bit of brownish stuff, with a piece bitten out, and showing the imprint of some boyish teeth in it, Master Pat's teeth, be it added; a little, partly eaten cake of cabanga!

When the assault on the sloop took place, Pat had been just ready to get into his pajamas, and had only had time to slip his legs into a pair of duck pants, and in the pocket of these pants was his tin box of cabanga. So, naked to his waist, and barefooted, he had put up his fight to save Billy, and had, as we know, been stabbed and choked for his pains, and tossed overboard.

Now it had just happened that the fair Ezabelita was, as usual, indulging in her rather unmaidenly habit of gazing from the top of Moro when the "wardroom mess" set sail for Ancon cove. Feeling the greatest indignation at what she deemed to be a base desertion on the part of the dark skinned, fluffy headed Bishop's son—not a rap cared

this fair one for the other three—she decided to give chase, late though it was, and inevitable as were seen to be the whacks from the *Preciosa* on her tardy return. To go to the cove by foot would mean a trip through the village, which was not to be thought of, but this doughty Amazon could handle a dug-out as well as the next one, and, not being any too nice as to the questions of ownership, she proceeded, quite leisurely, down the Moro and over to the house of the Agent of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, a summer cottage, built on high, concrete piles, and unoccupied at present. Under this house she found, just as she knew she would, a small native cayuca, and lifting it above her glossy head, she proceeded to carry it to the quay, launch it, board it, and so merrily away, with great coolness.

Arrived at the cove, she did not at once enter it, but watched the white figures on the far off beach from its mouth, cursing Pat in three languages, Spanish, English and Indian, as a faithless lover—poor curly-head, such an idea would have made him pink for a week!—and then, lying down in the bottom

of her tiny craft, Indian fashion, she let the current sweep her far out, past Uriva, just using her paddle enough to pass that island on the outside, and so missing the pangas as they pulled through the channel between it and Taboga. She heard the singing of the sailors, however, and called down the most horrid anathemas on their heads for the racket they made. They quite distracted her pleasing, sentimental thoughts! Sweet girl! She rather gloated over the possession of this handsome boy lover—she must possess him, body and soul, for he had taken her cabanga—and his very faithlessness added a gloomy charm. She even sang to the moon, and when that began to disappear behind Taboga, she sang to the Southern Cross. She sang a very passionate ditty, which would have made Pat most uncomfortable could he have heard, or understood it, which, since he was far off, and it was in Spanish, he couldn't have, luckily for him, wholesome lad! The ballad was most mournful, and was to the effect that "God had placed between us both (she and Pat, in spite of the fact that only twenty minutes before she had seen that

youthful curly-head in bathing!) so much land and so much sea," and ended with the query that what particular difference did it make anyway, even if God *had* placed "between us both, so much land and so much sea"? Oh, it was quite heartrending! Very much so indeed.

Well, Ezabelita was a good bit off shore by the time the fight on the "Sapalo" commenced, but the pistol shots she heard quite plainly, and, having rather vivid recollections of a Fourth of July celebration she had witnessed the year before, over in Panama, and which she considered very droll, and being quite hazy as to her dates, she decided that such must again be the case with the Americans on the sloop, and further, that, Pat or no Pat, if there was any fun going forward, she wasn't the girl to miss it, whereupon she sat up, dug her paddle into the water, and sent the cayuca skimming over the ocean at a great rate.

Arrived at the mouth of the cove, she decided, like the Greek chorus at the murder of Agamemnon, that "all was not well," and so swung her dug-out into the shadow of the

rocky wall of the cove, looking up just in time to see her beloved, dark skinned youngster tumbled into the water.

The noise on board the "Sapalo" was excessive, and so she very easily paddled to within thirty yards of it without being heard, and, since the moon was now hidden, no one saw her. Luckily for Pat, just as she stopped paddling, and, feeling that her boy of dreams had disappeared for good, had begun to cry, he at that moment came to the surface, whereupon Ezabelita grabbed those well beloved brown locks very firmly and yanked the youngster on board, at the imminent risk of upsetting the cayuca. In the meantime the "Sapalo" had been got under way.

Little Ezabelita cared not a jot for that, but she had troubles of her own, poor soul! She had her boy, certainly, scantily clad though he was, but she did not dare to take him home with her to the house on the Plaza del Corpus Christi. The very idea of facing her aged grandmother with this half stripped youngster, pretty though he was, made her shiver. No, that was out of the question, so, while she bound up the gash in his leg

quite skillfully, she decided to paddle over to a tiny, rocky island of which she knew, toward Otoki, and which held no saintly Preciosas, nor anybody else for the matter of that. Then she hesitated, scowled, and actually shook her fist at Pat's pale face. Why should she bother about this faithless lover? He was a lover, she had quite decided that, and he was certainly faithless, or he would have stayed at the Moro. While she was debating as to what to do about this, and was still bandaging the boy's thigh, her hand struck against something in his pocket, between it and his skin. It was something hard. The little incident of the cayuca has already shown us Ezabelita's views on property rights, so you won't be surprised when I tell you she very promptly withdrew her fair hand from its Red Cross work, and thrust it into Pat's pocket, and brought out the small tin box. After indulging in a few agreeable thrills as to the number of jewels it contained (it was an old tobacco box of Archie's, by the way), she finally opened it, and found her piece of cabanga, with the imprint of boyish teeth in it. She at once, for hers was

a practical soul, took two fingers, and opened Pat's lips with them, over his closed teeth. How pretty they looked! So even, and strong, and white! She was in an ecstasy! Still, she had one more task, so, with a fast beating heart, this female "doubting Thomas" proceeded to place the bitten edge of the cabanga against Pat's teeth. It fitted their surface perfectly, whereupon this simple creature went wild and—I think she kissed Pat, though he swears she didn't. At all events she hugged him, and very nearly upset the cayuca, which last act recalled her to the stern realities of life, so, with the boy's brown head in her lap, she once more dug her paddle into the Pacific and did not stop until she had reached her rocky island, when, having yanked Pat to a place of safety, with his bare feet resting in the water, the artless soul proceeded to give the cayuca a kick that sent it carrocoling out in the ocean, for of one thing Ezabelita was certain: her beautiful, dark skinned little boy should not get away again.

There was bread fruit on the island, and bananas, and pineapples, and several goats,

ancient relics of Grandmama's herd, and there was quite a nice spring of water, too, if you didn't mind the smell, and Ezabelita didn't, not in the least.

Of their life there little is known, for Pat gets cross if you mention it, and Ezabelita flies into a rage at the least hint of it. Dear child! I am afraid it was a disappointment, for it seems to have lacked romance. All I do know about it is this: that while poor Pat lay, half dead, things went along splendidly. He was a nice boy, was Pat, and he was very grateful to Ezabelita for rescuing him, and for taking care of him. He did wish she wouldn't make such a fuss over him; it made him feel so silly, but then, he guessed, girls 'most always did make a fuss! And she really did take first rate care of him, and so, in a week or two, he was almost as fit as ever. Then the trouble began.

Pat, as soon as he became well enough, missed his precious gold ring, the one his "Pater" had given him. Of course he did not know that the old Chinaman had torn it off his hand, after choking him and throwing him overboard, but he did know that it was

gone. Remember he had never seen Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat until the night of the fight at the cove, for neither he nor Don had gone into "La Mano del Dios" with Archie and the Commadore the time they bought the two eggs, so he never once associated his terrible assailant with anybody at Taboga. He told his troubles, like a young idiot, to Ezabelita, and she was most sympathetic. Oh, yes, she remembered the ring very well; she had noticed it the time she gave him his cabanga. Doubtless it had dropped off his finger in Ancon cove, and some day, so she said, she would dive for it, and scramble all over the cove till she got it. At present, however, he was not well enough to be left alone. From this Ezabelita decided that Pat liked jewelry as much as she did, and so, since he was still sick and weak, she had decked him out, quite regardless of expense, with a heavy "cadena chata"—a beautiful piece of native chain work, in pure, hand beaten gold,—draping it around his unfortunate neck, and over his bare shoulders and chest as many times as it would go, and adding to it an even greater treasure, in her opinion,

namely, a hideous rope of blue and green glass beads, made in Chicago, and fit for the finest five-and-ten-cent store in the land. This rope was short, and it nearly strangled the poor young husky to death in consequence, but his inconsistent Amazon wept so when he took it off that he let her use it as a pendant to the "cadena chata," where it rested, quite gorgeously, so Ezabelita thought, somewhere on his tough stomach.

When he was well again, however, though he really did try very hard to be nice to her, out of gratitude, he refused to be draped any more, and got quite sulky about it, whereupon Ezabelita wept again, and Pat, in the wholesome, clumsy fashion that was a part of him with girls, begged her pardon, and tried to make up, and, when she continued to howl most dismally, fit to make the very goats bleat (for she was terribly alarmed for fear the boy would stop trying to make up, and she was quite overjoyed at his clumsy gentleness), he said he had acted "beastly."

“ But you are an angel ! ” Ezabelita cried, beginning to smile. “ You are an angel—a big-boy angel, that is what you are ! ”

“ Not much, I ain’t ! ” Pat laughed, tremendously relieved that her wails had ceased, and still trying hard to be nice. “ I’m jolly mean, I know I am. You’ve been most awfully rippin’ to me.”

“ Ah, now I know that you are an angel ! ” the girl laughed, whereupon Master Pat backed away a little, though he still tried, in his own words, to be “ awfully jolly.”

“ Rats ! ” he said, attempting jocosity. “ If I was a boy angel, Miss Ezabelita ” (he never left off that “ Miss ”), “ If I was a boy angel, I’d wear a robe, ’stead of duck pants, and have a golden crown, and bare footsies, and——” but as the fair one here glanced coquettishly at his bare feet, and began to giggle, he stopped, and got quite red.

The greatest racket, however, was when Pat discovered what had become of the cayuca, their one means of escape to the mainland, and, incidentally, his one means of escape from Ezabelita. He was mad all over

that time, so mad that he almost cried. He stormed—but to his horror, Ezabelita was not in the least upset by his anger. On the contrary, she greatly enjoyed it. Was quite enraptured, in fact, asking him if he was ready to beat her?—for the island lads often beat their sweethearts before marrying them! That scared Pat pretty badly, so he became placative.

“But I say!” he began in a different tone. “This is awfully jolly, of course—I—I wish it could g-go on f-forever, living by the sea, an’ being such pals, an’—an’ talkin’ to the goats, an’ all—b-but I’ve just got to get to Panama to help the others, you know. Just awful things may have happened to ’em. Just beastly! When’ll we get back to Taboga, do you think? I’ve just got to go, an’——”

“Ah, yes,” Ezabelita interrupted easily. “It is true that we must at last return to Taboga, thou and I—to the house of my Grandmama, and,” with a significance that made poor Pat wriggle all over, “to the little church of Corpus Christi. That is so, Señor Englishman.”

“Gosh!” from the boy, feeling so miserably shy that it was about all he could say.

“Ah, do not despair!” Ezabelita cried with much graciousness, and much intense-ness. “See? I am here! And I will follow thee always, always—with a heart palpitating with love—and a machete! See, my owlet? But there! We will not return to Grandmama at once—I don’t like the goats! No, we will remain here a while longer, and I will crown your pretty brown head with double hybiscus blossoms.”

Then Pat lost his head:

“You ought to be ’shamed of yourself,” he blurted out, almost crying, “Talkin’ like that to a boy! And you’re just a little girl, anyhow! Why, you ought to be playin’ with dolls!”

“I am!” quite calmly, from Ezabelita.

Pat blushed.

“Well,” he said, sulkily, “I’m goin’ to get off this old island, somehow, if I have to swim for it!”

“Tra-la-la-lye-o!” hummed Ezabelita. “I shouldn’t swim, if I were you! There are sharks, you know, and they might eat your

pretty white pants—and you only possess the one pair!” and Pat, hot all over, and terribly conscious of the eyes fixed laughingly on his white back and shoulders, ran away toward the top of the island, his brown face burning, and in his young ears Ezabelita’s voice, singing with the most awful sentimentality:

“ ‘ Que importa, que nos divida,
Tanta tierra, y tanto mar? ’ ”

CHAPTER XVI
OF CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS, OF
THE YANGTSE-KIANG AND
OF A PEIHO JUNK

“ ‘till the wicked nurse confessed,
And we worked the old Three Decker to the Islands
of the Blest! ”

(—Rudyard Kipling.)

“ O I hae come from far away,
From a warm land far away,
A southern land across the sea,
With sailor lads about the masts,
Merry and canny and kind to me.”

“ And I hae been to yon town,
To try my luck in yon town—”
(—William Bell Scott.)

The island to which ‘ Mr. Mandarin ’ had taken his prisoners was very much on the order of Taboga, though the inhabitants, being more isolated, even outdid the simple folk of that island in their primitiveness. Also, the village was not more than half the size of Taboga, and was more squalid.

Before the “ Sapalo ” had come to anchor, Archie, at the Chinaman’s instigation, had

talked to the two boys about how they must behave, and then, taking Don aside, he had explained what plans had been made; how the Midshipman was to be sent home; how he was to be held a prisoner, and of what was to become of Billy.

Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat was as good as his word about being kind to them, and he even suggested that Archie restart Billy in some of his lessons, with the idea of keeping his mind occupied with this regular bit of routine each morning, and by so doing, gradually to wean his thoughts from the horror of Pat's unknown fate. The young tutor acquiesced heartily in this plan, nor could he help being grateful to the old fellow for the innumerable things he did to make the child contented and happy. He did not keep any of the three friends on board, but had them stay at a small, lightly constructed bungalow, built by one of the officers of the old French Canal Company, which, set apart as it was from the village, with two big poinsettia trees shading its front, and an avenue of royal palms leading up to it, was quite an attractive place.

About a week after they had landed, Archie, Don and Billy were all seated on the broad, cool veranda, Archie stretched out in a long, wicker morris chair, a tiny tabarette of black lacquer, inlaid with gold, at his elbow. On it were a tray and a smoking set of the same material. The green, Japanese straw awnings were only half unrolled, and the broad strip of woven grass matting with which the veranda was covered, was bordered with a narrow band of warm sunbeams, which danced on its soft, green surface, and over the feathery brilliancy of the poinsettia blossoms that were scattered on it in great splotches of vermillion. The young fellow in the morris chair had lost weight in the last seven days, due chiefly to the heavy troubles that were on him, but also from the constant effort he had to make to appear his natural, cheerful self. The two boys lounged on the oval mats, made of plaited straw, the little Commodore lying flat on his stomach, his chin resting on his fists, deep in "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils." It is to be doubted if even the learned board who conferred the Nobel Prize

on the author of this book admired Madam Lägerlof more intensely than did Billy.

Don glanced over the wide stretch of green matting to a corner of the porch, where a wonderful Quayaquil hammock of yellow and red fibre, swung in the soft breeze that was blowing in from the deep, blue waters of the Pacific.

“If it wasn’t that you were so much bigger than me,” he said lazily, looking up at Archie, “I’d have dumped you out of that hammock half an hour ago when you were taking your siesta. Never mind ! I’ll do it *mañana*.”

“Great word, that *mañana*, isn’t it ?” Archie smiled. “It’s like our to-morrow—only it never comes,” and he lit a cigar, and puffed in silence, a slight frown between his eyebrows.

“I say,” cried Don, noting the frown, “I—I haven’t made you mad, have I? I sure didn’t mean to. Honest !”

“Crazy in the head with the heat,” the other grinned. “Of course I’m not mad. I was only thinking of what would become of you, ‘Mr. Midshipman Easy,’ if you’d have ‘dumped me out,’ as you call it. There’d

have been one less Middie in the world, for one thing."

"I almost wish there was!" the boy said wearily, "and I want to be home, Archie! Oh! I'd give my soul to be home!"

"Shut up!" the tutor cut in. "For the Lord's sake, man, don't let's add homesickness to our other troubles! That'll be the last straw! And besides, you'll be going home in a month——"

Don jumped to his feet, his hands clenched at his sides:

"What do you mean?" he cried, his eyes full of angry tears. "Do you think I'd leave our Commodore, and—and you? I know what the Chinaman said, but I'm not going. He can kill me first, but I won't go."

The big tutor put one hand on the excited boy's shoulder.

"Steady, old man!" he said quietly. "I know the stuff you're made of. We're brothers from now on, lad—remember that."

Don sat down on the mat again, and for a while they were both quiet, the boy looking out over the side of the porch toward a huge mango tree, the reddish gold fruit of which

was being gathered by some of the sailors and placed into a basket, to be carried into the bungalow. Archie looked through the wreathes of blue smoke from his cigar at the ocean and then, closer in shore, to the cove where the "Sapalo" rested quietly at anchor. The frown had returned.

"Good day, sir!" said a voice behind him, and, glancing up, he recognized the handsome pirate boy, Tom.

He had a big, split-bottom basket full of mangoes on his shoulder, which he balanced in the crook of his left arm, while the other arm was hanging stiff at his side, the muscles tense under the weight of another basket, full of aguacates. Archie smiled up at him, and then, getting to his legs, he took the basket of mangoes.

"Great Scot, youngster!" he said, as he set it down. "You're husky, all right, but those two baskets are too heavy for you."

The boy grinned.

"That's nothin'!" he said, but he rubbed the muscles of first one bare arm and then the other, with rather a rueful shake of his head.

Somehow or other, this pirate boy had taken a liking to the tutor, though he detested Don, and was selfconscious and ill at ease in Billy's presence. Knowing this, the Midshipman had gotten up as the other boy came on the porch, and now, lifting the Commodore to his shoulder, he walked over to the mango tree, where he and the child were soon joined by 'Mr. Mandarin,' who had an ivory elephant for the little chap.

"It's awful hot!" the sailor lad said, as he threw himself on a mat with a tired, little grunt. "But it's fun to come over here and talk to you. You're great."

There was a shy adoration in this boyish compliment that pleased Archie and so, smiling back into the other's grey eyes, he said:

"Well, I like you, too, Tom, for the very same reason you say you like me—you're great! I wish we could chum together more, but it's only possible when you come to see me—I can't go on board the sloop, you know."

"I know that, sir," the boy answered, "and it's an awful nuisance. I don't mean I mind coming to see you," he added hastily,

“but I never know whether I come too much. Do I?”

“You certainly do not,” the man said emphatically. “But think, Boyito! I’ve told you a lot about myself, and you’ve not even met me half way. I’ve told you about my life when I was a small boy in Louisville, of my boarding school days, up north, at Groton, or my ’varsity work at both the University of Virginia and over at Oxford, on a Rhodes scholarship, but not one thing have you told me about yourself. That’s not just square, is it, mate?”

The boy fidgeted uneasily, and when he spoke, it was in a low, embarrassed voice:

‘It ain’t a bit interestin’, about me, I mean—only when you spoke about Louisville, it made me feel like talkin’ more. I dunno where I was born, mother never would tell me, but from the time I can remember good, till I was twelve, we lived in Kentucky, first at Lexington, where I worked as a stable boy, and then in Louisville, where I was an A. D. T. kid. It was lots of fun, bein’ an A. D. T. kid, ’cause I was on the night force, an’ I was goin’ ’round on my bicycle till four

o'clock in the morning. Mother taught me for a while, and then I went to public school," and the boy's voice stopped suddenly.

"Well?" Archie asked quietly.

"Well," Tom continued, "when I was twelve mother and I moved over to Los Angeles, an'—an'—Oh, well! she married again, an' I didn't like that for nothin', so I ran away to 'Frisco, an' shipped on one of the Pacific Mail steamers as a page—sort of a sea-goin' bell hop. It was fierce! So I—when we got to Shanghai, I beat it—I ran off, I mean—an'—an', Mr. Archie, the jolliest time I've ever had in my life was when I stripped off naked one night, there on the dock, an' chucked that durned red uniform, with its crazy little short-waisted pea-jacket, an' the fool little pill-box hat, with its gold braid, overboard. It was bully!" and the boy's eyes twinkled for a moment before he went on. "I put on some clothes I'd bought from a Chink, just an undershirt an' a pair of short pants, an' I shipped as cabin boy on the toughest old Peiho junk you ever saw. It was pretty awful on board, an'—an' I don't like to talk 'bout it," and he shivered

and then flushed. "Well, anyhow," he continued, "our papers were for Bombay, but soon as we'd cleared the harbor, we headed for Japan, an' didn't stop till we'd made Nakisaki. I was pretty sick when we got there, so the old man—the Captain, you know—a Chink from somewhere up the Yangtzse-Kiang, chucked me on the wharf, an' sailed off for Formosa. The rest is easy. 'Mr. Mandarin,' as you fellers call him, was in Nakisaki, on his way to Yokahama, to see a friend of his there, an' he found me, picked me up, took care of me, and now I'm here. He's been mighty good to me, an' he says he'll let me be a sailor when I grow up."

"But how did you get that voice of yours trained?"

"Oh, that's easy. I took lessons for a while up in a town on the Yangtsze-Kiang, I can't tell you its name—where me an' Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat lived for a bit, 'cause he just loved to hear me sing—he's crazy 'bout music, you know—but 'most of my training I got as a choir boy, when I was a kid in Louisville."

“Where? At Christ Church Cathedral?”

“Sure! Did you go there, Mister?”

“You just bet I did! I was a soloist there, when I was a youngster.”

“That’s great,” said the boy, glancing down at the most unchoir-boylike hand of his bright bladed machete, and laughing mischievously: “Then we’re feller citizens, choir mates, an’ shipmates, ain’t we?”

“Why, yes, and we’ll be more than that before we get through,” Archie answered.

“Whatcha mean?” asked the boy.

“Well, we’ll stick together, you and I, and the rest of us, and be helpmates one of these days,” the young fellow answered.

“What was your father’s name, Boyito?”

“I dunno,” blushing, and looking a little sulky.

“Do you know your mother’s name?”

“Well, I should say I do!” the pirate boy replied, a rare pride in his young voice. “She was from swell people—up in New York. Her name was Fanny vanZandt.”

CHAPTER XVII

“AULD ROBIN GRAY”

*“But such a tide as moving, seems asleep,
Too full for sound or foam.
When that which drew from out the boundless deep,
Turns again home!”*

(—Alfred Tennyson.)

“Tom,” said Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat a few days after the above conversation, “I have to go to Taboga for a week and, young as you are, I know I can trust you—for I’ve been good to you. Haven’t I?” and he smiled down at the boy.

His keen old eyes noticed the way the lad winced as he said this, and so he followed up his advantage promptly.

“I shall leave the “Sapalo” just where she is, and shall leave Alf in command, but remember, you are responsible for the three Americans, though I’ll leave the others to help you. Now you saw me strangle that dark skinned English boy with my hands, that night at Ancon cove, and just be good

enough to remember that is what will happen to Tom, if they get away. The big fellow is fond of you, so I will tell him, and then, if I know anything about his kind, he will see that all of them stay here."

"Indeed, Kum-Sing," the boy said, his breath coming in pants from between his half open lips, "I'd lots rather not. Please let me go with you to Taboga."

"It is all settled," the old man answered, "and I cannot change my plans. Be a good boy—without it you'll never be a good sailor. And while I am at Taboga I will run over to Panama and bring you some new songs, some oratorios, that are really very pretty, and of which I am especially fond. They will suit your voice."

For a long time after the old Chinaman had walked over to the bungalow, Tom stood on the hot beach. As he thought of Archie, and of all the young fellow's healthy companionship meant to him, he undid the gaudy red sash that was around his thick waist, and let the machete drop to the sand, but a moment later a picture came to him of a cruelly beaten, morally horrified, small boy,

lying on the dock at Nakisaki, with a kind, fat old man in a gorgeous mandarin robe bending over him and carrying him in his own arms to a jinrickshaw, and as he thought of all this he stopped, picked up the sash, re-tied it and, thrusting the heavy blade of the knife through it, walked slowly toward the “Kitten,” where she rode a few feet from the quay. There were tears in his eyes as he waded out to her and climbed on board, and, taking up the oars, began to row toward the sloop, his gaze fixed steadily on the bungalow. As he rowed, he sang softly an old Scotch song he had not thought of since he had left his mother:

“ ‘ O sair, sair did we greet, and muckle
did we say;
We took but ae kiss, and we tore our-
selves away.
I wish that I was dead, but I’m no
like to dee;
And why was I born to say Wae’s
me? ’ ”

The steady swing of his oars, and the sad young voice blended together as he rowed

further and further from the shore, his tones rising as the distance increased:

“‘I gae like a ghaist, an’ I carna to
spin;

I durna think on Jamie, for that wad
be a sin;

But I’ll do my best a gude wife to be,
For auld Robin Gray he is kind unto
me!’ ”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BUNGALOW AMONG THE POINSETTIAS

*“ Fierce he broke forth: ‘ And dar’st thou then,
To beard the lion in his den,
The Douglas in his hall?
And hop’st thou hence unscathed to go?—
No, by Saint Bride of Bothwell, no!
Up drawbridge, grooms—what, warders, ho!
Let the portcullis fall! ’ ”*
(—Sir Walter Scott.)

The old Chinaman knew human nature very well indeed, and he was perfectly sure of the proper methods to be used to play on Tom’s sympathies and peculiarities. He had, he felt certain, succeeded in implanting, or to be more accurate, in intensifying, the boy’s loyalty and feeling of obligation to himself, and before sailing for Taboga he proceeded to lay plans for the touching of another chord in the lad’s soul: his love for the romantic and the bizarre. He had a talk with Alf and the other sailors, all American or English, that he was leaving on the

“Sapalo,” and instructed them, with a humorous twinkle in his slanting old eyes, to treat the temporary commander with great respect, and Alf, answering for the other seamen, as well as for himself, replied, “Aye, aye, sir,” with a grin of such complete understanding that Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat was quite enraptured. Just before he slipped from the panga, in which Tom had rowed him to the side of the “Paloseco,” the schooner that was to take him to Taboga, and which the old fellow had quite fatuously named after the Panamenian Leper colony, he handed the boy a thin bladed, ivory handled knife. It was a beautiful piece of workmanship, both as to the finely tempered steel in the blade, and the ornate carving on the hilt.

“It is a cruel knife, this,” he said, as he gave it to the youngster, “but it will suit you. Do you know, my son, what the Midshipman boy calls you? He shivers when he says it, and I do not wonder! He calls you ‘that Pirate Boy.’ What would he call you if he saw this little blade over his thick, white throat—in that brown hand of yours? Hey?

Well, as I said, it is a cruel knife, but it is just the thing for a 'Pirate Boy,' or a Devil Boy! Good-bye. Keep a good watch, and try to remember your fat, old Mandarin, won't you, Tom, and our good times in the little bungalow over on the Yangtsze-Kiang? We will have many more good days there, my son, before you have a ship of your own. Yes, as I have said, keep a good watch! Trust nobody!" And as the schooner sailed away, the old fellow made a quaint little Oriental salaam, which the boy, standing in the panga, returned very gravely, as he had been taught.

Then he sat to his oars, and rowed over to the "Sapalo," where he was received with a grim and grisly courtesy that was quite different to the usual, hail-fellow-well-met manner that existed between himself and the other men before the mast, and that was very flattering to him. Leaving the little sloop, he was rowed, this time in the gig, to the island, and it was with no little feeling of pride that he swaggered into the bungalow where, it being almost half-past eleven, breakfast was well under way. Hi-Chow, Kum-Sing's servant, pulled out the Man-

darin's beautiful inlaid armchair of teak wood that stood at the head of the small table, and the boy sat down.

Archie, sitting opposite to him, smiled his usual jolly greeting, Don nodded, and Billy grinned in most friendly fashion, for he liked 'The Good Little Devil,' as Archie sometimes called Tom, though he stood in some awe of him, due chiefly to the machete that he always wore.

"Gimme some more of that 'Bombay duck,' Hi-Chow," Tom said, after he had sat silent for a while, and after he had helped himself to the curried rice, he added, "It's just bully!"

"Me get!" the servant answered, smiling from ear to ear, for, next to Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, there was nobody whom he liked as he did the pirate boy.

"Better try some of this chutney, Tom," said Don, passing him that most delectable of condiments. "It's dandy."

"Hi-Chow'll gimme what I want," Tom answered gruffly, scowling at Don.

He did not know it, of course, but the effect of that frown on his brown, freckled,

impudent face was really funny. It was too much for Billy, and he began to giggle.

“O-o-oh!” he grinned. “Do that some more. Please do! You’re makin’ a rippin’ ‘Pirate Boy’ now, and——”

“You shut up!” Tom answered angrily, a dull flush showing under his tanned skin, and leaning over, he slapped the astonished small boy.

For a second the child shrank back, and then a blush showed in turn on his face, but before he could say, or do, anything, the Midshipman had jumped to his feet, and had struck Tom over the mouth with his opened hand.

“Hit somebody your own size, you cad!” he cried angrily.

The other boy jumped up so suddenly that the heavy teak chair upset.

“You just bet I will!” he yelled, and he gave Don a blow on the side of his yellow head that sent him to the floor, rather stunned by his fall. In a moment Tom was on the husky, scuffling Midshipman, who was still a little dazed, so that the younger

boy's sturdy heaviness crushed down the solid form under him.

Hi-Chow, at the very first signs of a fight, had rushed into the kitchen, and now returned with a carving knife in one hand, and grabbing the heavy mahogany table, began to push it, with Archie behind it, into a corner, shrieking and chattering shrilly. He was afraid that the big tutor would hurt his "dear boy," and he was going to prevent it. Whether his "dear boy" killed Don or not was another matter—that didn't worry him at all.

"*You* started callin' me names, you big sissy, you!" Tom panted, as he began to choke the struggling youngster under him. "You wanted to make fun of me, didn't you? An'—an' laugh at me, callin' me 'Pirate Boy,' an' all that! Well now—take it back! Do you hear? Take it back!"

"I won't!" Don answered breathlessly, his hands closing on the strong brown wrists in an effort to loosen the merciless young fingers that were closing tighter and tighter around his throat.

Suddenly Tom drew the thin bladed knife that Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat had given him, and holding it above his head, ready to strike, he cried, half maddened by the unfrightened defiance in the other lad's eyes:

“Now will you take it back?”

“No!” and the knife was about to descend, when a wolfish little cry sounded in the room, and the next instant the pirate boy felt a sharp pain in the muscles of his right forearm, the one in which he held the knife, as Billy's white teeth tore through the tough, sun-browned skin, and sank into the flesh.

With a sharp gasp of pain, Tom let go of the Midshipman and, clenching his left fist, he struck the little boy in the chest, and without a sound the teeth relaxed their hold, and the youngster crumpled up on the floor in a small heap. In that moment, however, Don had struggled to his feet, and at the same instant Archie, picking up the table bodily, had downed the sprightly Hi-Chow, who now lay under the wreckage, wailing dismally.

Tom, seeing that both Don and Archie were now coming toward him, jumped into a

corner, where he stood, his face dead white, his knife held ready. Archie walked straight up to him and caught the hand that held the knife, and then, exerting his strength, he brought both the boy's wrists together, his eyes blazing, his face set.

"Take that knife, Don!" he said to the Midshipman. "Now, boy," to Tom, "there's the door. Go! You'll have to come back at dinner time, because Kum-Sing told you to—but don't forget one thing: you're a coward! That's all! Now, go!"

Very straight, his big eyes looking directly before him, his hands clenched at his sides, the pirate boy walked slowly to the door. Big, scalding tears tumbled down his face, and he let them fall unashamed, as he let the warm drops of blood run down his torn arm, unchecked. A moment later he was gone.

CHAPTER XIX

“YELLOW JACK”

“Not me! Not much! We never leaves a Pal when we’re out asploring. Long as we lives we never does it. Not never!”

(—Hall Caine.)

Much to Archie’s relief, the Commodore was not at all badly hurt, only a good deal upset, as Don explained it, and yet he did not seem to be in any way proud of having saved the Midshipman’s life. It was very different with his tutor, however, for the big fellow gloried in his youngster’s pluck, and Don, though he did not say much, boy fashion, felt deeply enough the fearless love Billy had shown in coming to his help.

“You’re the spunkiest kid I ever heard of!” he said when the small boy had got his breath.

“Now, what’s going to be the outcome of all this, Donny?” Archie asked an hour later, when the Chinaman had retired to the

kitchen, still weeping copiously, and they were all seated on the veranda.

“ I hardly know, sir,” Don replied, “ but the chances are that that pirate boy will go back to the “ Sapalo ” and return, probably after dark, with the whole pack at his heels, and then——”

“ And then? ” from the tutor.

“ I dunno what will happen exactly.”

In spite of their expectations to the contrary, Tom did not tell what had happened, and at dinner that evening, he came in and sat down at his place without a word, his eyes hidden under his thick, brown lashes. It was the first time since he had known him that Archie had ever seen the boy fail to meet his eyes squarely.

“ Probably feels like a whipped dog! ” he thought, “ and it’s a jolly good thing.”

Only once did the grey eyes look up, and that was when Don and the tutor began to discuss the proper way to lay a course from Bocas del Toro to Porto Bello, and then, for just a moment, he listened eagerly, but as soon as Archie’s look caught his, he dropped his eyes again.

After dinner, while the others sat on the beach, Tom stayed in the Quayaquil hammock, his eyes following them faithfully, as he had promised Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, like some sullen little watch dog. The three friends on the sands talked earnestly, in low voices.

“One of us must stay awake all night, Don,” Archie said. “We’ve got to keep an eye on that young devil, and he sleeps in the bungalow since the old man has gone.”

“You just bet we have to,” Don agreed, “and we’ll take turns. Shall we?”

“Right you are, and we’ll have our Commodore bunk with us! How about it, Buster?”

“Yes, sir!” the boy answered, “but I’d love to take my watch, like the rest of you. Couldn’t I?”

“I’m afraid not, old man,” from Archie. “You’ve been too much of a hero once to-day for us to risk your getting hurt again.”

“But it’d be no end jolly to be a guard!” Billy protested, but Archie shook his head, and they all three got to their feet, and strolled back to the house.

About ten o'clock, after the tutor had put Billy to bed, he said to Don, as he slipped into his pajamas:

"Do you know, I believe that sailor boy is sick? No youngster of his temperament could sulk as steadily as this, without breaking loose, and he's been lying in that hammock on the porch ever since dinner."

"Pshaw, he's made of too tough stuff to get sick!" Don grunted. "He's just plain mad, that's all," and he sat down in a chair, ready for his four hour watch, while Archie curled himself up by the softly breathing little Commodore, and went fast to sleep.

At two o'clock, in the damp chill of the early tropic morning, Don, worn out by his vigil, called the tutor and then took his place on the bed by the small boy, while Archie, slipping his toes into a pair of Chinese slippers, walked softly out on to the porch, and looked over the quiet sea for a moment, and then glanced cautiously toward the Quayaquil hammock, and the next moment, with a startled cry, he had sprung toward it, for in it lay the pirate boy, as he had expected, but

all huddled up, his eyes wide with terror, his face flushed and contorted with pain, and with the deadily nausea that seemed to be tearing at his very huskiness like a claw. His eyelids were slightly swollen, and his body shook with a chill. As Archie knelt down by the side of the hammock, and saw the real agony on the young face, all his hatred for the lad vanished, and he said gently:

“What’s the matter, Tom? Won’t you tell a fellow?”

For a second the sick boy tried to keep up the sulky silence that his hurt pride had caused, but he could not manage it, so at last he spoke:

“Oh, I dunno,” he moaned, with a shiver. “But I’m sick, just awful sick!”

The man looked at him more closely, and took one of his hot hands between his big, cool ones. On the flushed face was discernible a faint, strange, jaundiced hue, while the eyes, usually so clear, were now reddish and injected. An expression of horror came into his face, and as the sick boy noticed it, the fear in his eyes became more distressed.

“It ain’t ‘Yellow Jack,’ is it?” he panted, pathetically scared.

“I do not know, but I think it’s yellow fever,” Archie answered quietly. “Wish to goodness I was a doctor! Put your arms around my neck, Tom, and I’ll carry you in to bed.”

“Oh, you’ll leave me now! The lot of you! You’ve got your chance,” the boy gasped, as Archie picked him up in his arms. “But go ahead. I—I’d rather you got off. Honest!”

“Then you don’t know us, Boyito,” the man answered gravely. “We gave you our words we’d stay, and you know what will happen to you if we go—not from the fever, but from Kum-Sing, I mean. We just couldn’t leave you to that.”

“But you never promised Kum-Sing, he told me so himself. You promised me—an’ I guess I’ll give that promise back—’cause—’cause—I guess I want you to get off—sort of—only I’m scared, ’cause—’cause if he starts to hurt me a lot—I may—better take back your promise.”

“Better still! Now we’ll never leave you, unless we all leave together,” saying which, Archie laid the boy on his bed.

CHAPTER XX

“ A GOOD LITTLE DEVIL ”

*“ O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
The hands that cling, and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet,
' Who hath remembered me? Who hath forgotten?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
But the world shall end when I forget.”*
(—Algernon Charles Swinburne.)

Tom must have contracted the yellow fever during a flying trip that he and Blas had taken to Panama city some days before, to mail a letter for “ Mr. Mandarin ”; a letter that the old fellow insisted should bear the postmark of Ancon, C. Z. In it was a message that was to bow the grey head of William vanZandt in the keenest sorrow that he had ever known, for it told him of Billy's death, and of the finding of his other grandchild, the son of his disinherited daughter, Fanny. It described Tom as being very much like his mother (which he wasn't in the least !), and gave a most pathetic little picture of the mother's death, at which time,

so it was stated, she had left the boy to the tender care of the writer.

In reality, Tom's mother had been only too glad when he had run away, and had later received what seemed to her rather a handsome sum of money from Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat for giving up legal claim to the boy. It never entered the good lady's head that the Chinaman was planning to kidnap her brother's son, and then produce her own child as heir to her father's money, but such was the case.

Kum-Sing knew very well that as soon as the letter reached Mr. vanZandt, the old gentleman would cable his daughter-in-law, in Panama, and that then an investigation would begin. Forseeing which, he had laid his plans carefully, and it was for the carrying out of these same plans that he had gone to Taboga, for he knew of an Englishman, a typical soldier of fortune, who had come to South America in an ocean-going yacht, for the purpose of hunting some hidden treasure off the Pearl Islands. Having failed to find it, the Briton found the yacht rather an onus on his hands, and so the old Chinaman knew

he could have it just about at his own price. He was going to buy the “ Dagmar,” that was the ship’s name, and take his prisoners and Tom over to his little bungalow on the banks of the Yangtsze-Kiang, letting the “ Sapalo ” drift to Panama, a silent witness of the little boy’s death.

He sent Alf a letter, telling him of his plans, ending with the statement that he would return with the “ Dagmar ” in exactly two weeks, arriving off the island at seven o’clock, Monday morning. That was this old fellow’s methodical way.

Now, when he had received the letter, it occurred to the old sailor that he should at once consult the pirate boy, whom Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, as he knew, had left in charge of the prisoners, and so, about nine o’clock on the same morning that Tom had collapsed, he took his letter, which he had received on the returning “ Palaseco ” the night before, and walked to the bungalow. Just before he reached it, the excited, hysterical Chinese cook darted out, rushed up to him and told him of the case of yellow fever, whereupon Alf, giving him the note, and

having made the astonished Hi-Chow swear by all the Josses in Jossland that he would give it to Tom if he was well enough to read it, and if not, would destroy it, he hurried back to the " Sapalo " to think over what was best to be done. The long and short of it was that he set a guard of three men to patrol the beach, and in the meantime waited for some boat to pass from the Pearl Islands by which he could send a message to Taboga.

Tom's attack of yellow fever was not at all a severe one, though bad enough, so he thought, and the three friends had their hands full, nursing him. The strangest part of it all was that the sick lad would now do anything Billy said, not always willingly, may be, but submissively, and even on the third day of his sickness, when he lay exhausted from the loss of haematemitic blood, he would swallow the tiny pieces of crushed ice that the small boy gave, and would try to thank him, too, even when the excruciating abdominal pains that he suffered brought the sweat out in great beads on his face.

At first Archie had felt unwilling to let his small charge go into the infected room,

but after Don, who had heard his medical friend at Ancon talk for a solid hour on the subject of the conveyance of yellow fever by mosquitoes, and by that means alone, and as the island was entirely free from this pest, he finally let the youngster do his part in the nursing, with the result that he became the most valuable of the three. The utter helplessness of this brown young husky appealed to all that was best in Billy's chivalrous little soul, and both Archie and Don were amazed at his untiring tenacity.

After the crisis was well over, and Tom was able to sit on the porch most of the time, still weak, but tranquil, as he rested back on his pillows, he would get all the “ Red Cross Society,” as Archie called them, to sit around him, and, as Don strummed softly on his banjo, they would all sing to him until they felt that they could not possibly sing another note, when Tom would beg for just one more tune, and if Archie would shake his curly head, and smile helplessly, Don would interfere:

“Aw, go ahead and sing, Mr. Archie!” he would strike in, “if our ‘Good Little Devil’ wants us to. Tune up!”

“That’s right!” Tom would grin, “do what ‘Mr. Midshipman Easy’ says; tune up!—just to please your—your ‘Good Little Devil,’ you know.”

(It was always “Mr. Midshipman Easy,” and “Our Good Little Devil” nowadays, for the two boys were friends even to the point of Don offering to teach the sailor lad what he knew of navigation, and, what was still more remarkable, for Tom to be willing to accept the instruction.)

It was a queer sight, the quintette that indulged in these “Sing-Songs,” as Don loved to call them, in true Naval fashion. Tom, weak, a little languid still, his large eyes looking bigger than ever in his pale, freckled face, lying back in the rattan morris-chair; Billy sitting on one of its arms, his head resting on the pirate boy’s brown one, an arm flung carelessly over the larger boy’s shoulders; Don sitting, Turk fashion, at his feet on one end of the big mat, his banjo on his knees; Hi-Chow, grinning hap-

pily, squatting on the other end, a strange little Oriental drum in his lap, from which, by a series of dexterous little taps and rubs, he could produce the most fearful racket; and Archie, looking careworn and tired, but smiling for all that, swinging back and forth in the Quayaquil hammock, singing at the top of his voice, or softly, as the song demanded.

Hi-Chow had fulfilled his promise to Alf, and had given “ Mr. Mandarin’s ” note to Tom, but he had waited until he felt that the boy was well enough to read it, which happened to be on the night of one of these “ Sing-Songs.”

After looking at the finely written page many times, the youngster scowled, and then, as he curved his arm more closely around the warm body of the drowsy Commodore, he spoke:

“ He can’t have you, Billy,” he said aloud. “ An’ he shan’t have any of ’em, not if your ‘ Good Little Devil ’ knows it.”

“ What’s up, Tom? ” Don asked in surprise.

For a few seconds Tom did not answer, and when he finally did, it was to Archie.

“Isn’t it time for our Commodore to go to bed ”

“High time,” the tutor replied briskly, picking the sleepy small boy up in his arms. Come ahead, you young night owl!” and he carried Billy off.

When they were gone, Tom turned to the Midshipman:

“‘Mr. Midshipman Easy,’” he said, a little sadly, “read this. I’m doin’ right in showin’ this to you, but it’s the first time I ever broke a promise an’—oh, it’s all sort of hard! But you read it, please,” and he handed the letter to the older boy.

“What you going to do about it?” Don asked, looking up from the note.

“Show it to Mr. Archie,” Tom answered sturdily, “an’ do whatever he says—though I’ve a sort of a plan my own self. Oh, Don! If I wasn’t feeling so blamed good-for-nothin’!”

At this moment Archie rejoined them, having left Billy with Hi-Chow, who, since the small boy’s kindness to Tom, had become quite slavish in his devotion to him.

“ What’s up? ” he asked.

“ Pretty much everything,” Don answered, as he handed him the letter.

After the tutor had read it he sat silent for a while and then, as was always his way when he had a worrying problem to think of, he took out his pipe, filled it, lit it, and puffed several times before he spoke.

“ We’ve got just four days left,” he said quietly, “ in which to do anything. Just exactly four days and a night. Wonder if you’ll be able to get around by that time, Tom? ”

“ Why, I’ve just got to,” the boy answered, “ an’ I’ll tell you what we’ll do, sir, that is, if you an’ Don agree, or if you can’t think of anything else. Kum-Sing comes in, on the “ Dagmar,” Monday morning. Well, Sunday night we five will just have to get hold of the “ Sapalo ” and make for Panama, or, better still, La Boca. Hi-Chow will do his part, if you let him do it his way; it’s an awful ugly way, but it works! God knows how we can protect our Commodore, but we’ll do the best we can! Counting Alf, there are seven men on the “ Sapalo,” but

three are always on duty, on the beach. If we could finish up those first, we would be equal in numbers, though not, by a long sight, in strength, to the fellows on board."

"Good!" Archie interrupted excitedly. "And we'll do it, Boyito! We'll have to!"

"Yes," Tom continued, "an' I'll tell you how. Hi-Chow an' me will stay in the bungalow with Billy, an' I'll raise sand—yell for help, an' all that, you know—an' when the guard from the beach comes up we'll fight 'em the best we can. Remember, there are only two revolvers, and that's all the fire-arms we've got. I'll keep one, and you take the other. I ain't a very good shot, but you bet I'll do the best I can! An' Hi-Chow can use my machette. If the sailors lick us, I'll try to hold 'em, while he takes Billy out the side window, and joins you fellows."

"But, Tom," Don cried, "we are not going to leave a sick fellow like you! We just can't do that; can we, Mr. Archie?"

"But it seems to me that we've got to," the man answered, a catch in his voice, and all were silent. At last Don spoke:

"Then when'll we try it?" he asked.

“ Sunday night, about eight. That will give Tom the last four days in which to get stronger,” Archie answered. “ The tide’s right then, too, and it will hardly be before, and besides, we’ll not be able to get to La Boca, nor Panama either, without passing Taboga, and that would be a fool’s errand to attempt in the day, and with Kum-Sing there to see us.”

The next morning Tom took Hi-Chow into his confidence, and found, as he had felt certain that he would, that he could trust him implicitly, unless Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat should return before they left, in which case he would undoubtedly prove quite useless, on account of the absolute terror he felt for that plump old gentleman. Telling Billy of the plan proved, strange to say, very much harder, because the small boy had been through so much, that the idea of their deliberately going into another fight scared him. The horror of Pat’s fate came back to him vividly, and in the end he burst out crying—he was only a ten-year-old, remember.

No one ever knew just how much Archie suffered at this time, for, after calming the

little chap, he had to explain that he was to stay in the bungalow with Hi-Chow and the pirate boy, until the rest succeeded in taking the ship, when he was to join them. If, of course, as was highly probable, Tom and the Chinaman succeeded in getting the best of the three seamen of the beach guard, from their ambush in the bungalow, before the sloop was reached, they would all make a rush for it together, and row off, taking their chances about boarding the "Sapalo."

CHAPTER XXI

“THE CONQUERED BANNER”

*“Furl that banner, for ’tis weary,
Round its staff ’tis drooping dreary,
Furl it, fold it, it is best;
For there’s not a man to wave it—
And there’s not a sword to save it,
And there’s not one left to lave it
In the blood which heroes gave it;
And its foes now scorn and brave it;
Furl it, hide it—Let it rest!”*
(—Father Ryan.)

Sunday night came, and was as peaceful as a night could well be. The tide was high, and by eight o’clock the sound of its lapping was easy to hear, while some distance off, the dull booming of the black waters sounded ominously, as the great, full tide rolled against the reef that protected part of the cove, and came thundering on the smooth, slippery rocks, to slide, hissing, among them for a moment, only to be sucked out again into the ocean.

At half-past seven, Archie called all the rest around him, and, as he took the Com-

modore on his lap, his blue eyes were troubled. Very quietly he opened the small Bible he held in his hand, and began to read. He read the opening part of the great Fortieth chapter of Isaiah, ending with the Eleventh verse, when his low voice rang out suddenly, with all the vigorous faith of a strong man, a light on his face like unto a golden headed, gloriously young Saint Michael; a youth militant:

“ ‘ He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.’ ”

The room was very still now, the only sound the breathing of the five people that were in it, each praying in his own way to face whatever was in store for him. The Chinaman moved noiselessly to the table and lit five small Joss sticks and, kneeling before them, he touched his head to the ground three times, and then joined the others, who were now standing. Suddenly Archie spoke:

“ Boys,” he said determinedly, “ we’ll all stick together—I can’t leave Billy, and,” lay-

ing his hand gently on Tom's shoulder, “and I can't leave you.”

“But the plan!” Don objected, though he felt greatly relieved, too.

“We'll all walk down to the beach together, slowly, you know, like we often do, and then we'll jump in the panga, and Tom will hold off the men on the beach with his gun, while the rest of us get her going. You can take my revolver, and cover them while he gets in, and Hi-Chow and I will row.

“An' if I get hit it won't make the same difference as the others—I see, sir!” Tom struck in quietly, his voice steady.

“In—in a way, yes, Boyito!” the young fellow answered sadly. “All ready? Come along, then! Keep your side arms close, you fellows! Easy with that machete, Hi-Chow!” and they walked out, and toward the cove.

It was no easy matter to stroll along in so unconcerned a manner, when their nerves were strained to the breaking point; but it was necessary. As their feet struck the smooth, brown pebbles of the quay, Archie gave the word, and Billy jumped into the

panga, while Tom, pointing his gun at the big sailor, who had started running up the beach, fired. As the man dropped, Archie, Don and the Chinaman ran the boat out into the deep water, and then jumped aboard. A rifle cracked from further up the beach as the two other guards came running, and Tom stumbled, but the next moment he was on his feet again, and had waded through the water to the waiting panga. Another rifle ball passed over the boat as he climbed on board, and another, following on its heels, ploughed its way into the soft, white skin over Billy's right shoulder, coming out at a point under the arm, between the intersecting lines of the blue cross. Tom caught the bleeding youngster as he sank to the bottom of the boat, and as he did so, the Midshipman's revolver spat out a streak of flame, and the man who had shot the small boy threw up his arms, spun 'round, and then fell on his face.

“Row!” cried Tom. “Row like hell!” and the panga cut through the long, smooth swells, being almost lifted out of the water by the strength of the strokes. As she grazed



A RIFLE BALL PLOUGHED ITS WAY INTO BILLY'S RIGHT
SHOULDER. — PAGE 192.

the white sides of the “Sapalo” they could see Alf, a grim shadow in the darkness, waiting for them, a rifle in his arm.

Suddenly Hi-Chow jumped to his feet and, as he sprang to the deck, the old sailor fired, but too late, for, as the ball passed through the Chinaman’s body, the blade of his machete fell on the other’s skull, and they dropped to the deck, and, in a ghastly embrace, rolled into the sea.

Don and Archie, the latter with the revolver now, had gained the deck by this time, leaving Tom in the panga with the wounded little boy.

“There are three more to settle,” the Midshipman panted, and picking up the rifle that Alf had been using, he followed Archie forward, where the three remaining sailors were huddled close to the bowsprit, their hands above their heads. They had no firearms; the only gun left on board the sloop being Alf’s.

Leaving Don to guard the three men, Archie went back to the panga, and helped Tom to get the poor, limp, little Commodore on board.

“We’ve won!” Tom cried exultingly.

“Run up the colors!” the Middie answered, from the bow.

“I wouldn’t, if I were you, Master Don,” said the voice of the seaman, Smith. “Look there, off the port quarter, sir!”

Tom had already run up the yachting ensign, and as he glanced over the stern he saw something that made him stand rigid, the halyards still in his hands, for, steaming into the narrow entrance of the cove, picking her way carefully through the intricate channel, was the graceful, white hull of a steamer, her yacht bow cutting the black water daintily, her two rakish, buff colored funnels letting out thick puffs of black smoke.

“It’s the ‘Dagmar,’ groaned Archie. “See her yachting rig? Kum-Sing’s come back twelve hours too early! Strike those colors, Tom!” and as the flag slipped slowly down the staff, the rattle of the big yacht’s anchor chain could be plainly heard, as she hove-to, directly across the entrance to the cove.

CHAPTER XXII

“DE PROFUNDIS ”

*“ On the shore, dimly seen through the mists of the
deep,
Where the foe’s haughty host in dread silence
reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o’er the towering
steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam, of the morning’s first beam,
In full glory reflected, now shines on the stream;
’Tis the star spangled banner—oh, long may it wave,
O’er the land of the free, and the home of the brave! ”*
(—Francis Scott Key.)

Very quietly they handed over their fire-arms to the three seamen, who took them without a word. There was no harshness shown, and Smith even went down into the cabin and brought up bandages and sterile gauze with which to dress the wound in Billy’s shoulder, and later, when the small boy seemed to be suffering past all endurance, and Archie asked him to go to the small medicine chest, and get the hypodermic case, he gladly went a second time, and held the

Commodore in his arms, very gently, while the tutor fixed a small dose of morphia in the little, nickel syringe, and then injected it into the slim arm.

To tell the truth, the three sailors who now were in charge of the "Sapalo" felt a good deal of pity for the three boys and the man whom they were guarding, particularly as what would be their fate when the morning once came, was now so certain.

Billy, under the influence of the opiate, slept quietly, and Tom, weak from his recent illness, was soon doing the same. Don and Archie paced the deck slowly, neither speaking for awhile. At last the tutor walked up to Smith, and spoke in a low voice:

"Smith," he said steadily, "What will be the outcome of all this? To-morrow morning, I mean, when Kum-Sing takes us on board the Dagmar? Tell me exactly, man; I know pretty well already. He'll kill me, but how?"

"He'll hang you, sir. He won't waste time for anything else now; you and the young Midshipman."

“ But, good God, man! Don’s only a child! ”

“ He’ll hang, for all that.”

“ And the two other boys? ”

“ Oh, they’ll be safe enough, sir. He wants them for something else—some plan he’s got in his old head.”

“ If I could just tell them good-bye! ” Archie sighed. “ And if only they don’t let our Commodore see us when it happens! ” Then, joining Don, he said softly: “ Try to sleep, Donny. We’ll all need our wits to-morrow.”

“ You take a little rest, sir,” the Midshipman answered steadily. “ Oh, I heard what Smith told you just now, and I can stand it, only—only I hope they’re quick—and I hope Billy don’t see it! I’m going to wake Tom toward daybreak, sir, and tell him. He’ll—he’ll want to know—and he can tell the Commodore—afterwards.”

“ You’re right, Don,” the man answered. “ Tom will want to know.”

As the first opalescent tints of the dawn began to take the place of the jetty darkness

that immediately preceded it, the tutor and Don woke Tom, and told him.

“We—we wanted to say good-bye, you know,” the Midshipman said huskily, not daring to look at the grey eyes of the youngster opposite him, but holding out his hand.

The boy took it in his own brown fist, and held it tightly, and, a moment later, something warm had splashed on it.

“Good-bye, ‘Mr. Midshipman Easy!’”

“Good-bye to you, ‘Good Little Devil’!” and they turned away without another word.

“Be good to our Commodore, Tom,” said Archie. “And don’t tell him any more than you have to.”

“I’ll do my best, sir,” the sailor boy answered, and then his voice broke, as he added: “Oh, God! to be left behind! An’ I’ll have to tell him, poor baby!”

“Yes,” Archie answered, “you’ve got the harder path to follow, boy! We suffer for just a little while, but you——” and he stopped.

Then he knelt down by the sleeping little boy and kissed him on the forehead:

“I’ve failed you, Billy,” he said softly, pushing back the damp, golden hair gently. “But oh, my little boy, my little boy, you’ll forgive me, won’t you? Please, Billy! Good-bye, good-bye, my Commodore!” and he rose to his feet just as Don, who was standing up and looking at the white hull of the steamer, uttered a strange cry, and pointed to her stern.

The opal lights had changed to pink, and these, in turn, had been succeeded by soft purples and reds, and now great shafts of gold shot through the mists, which began to lift, and as they rolled seaward, the clear tones of a bugle sounded from the ship, and a moment later the boom of a cannon shook the tranquillity of the island, and at the same instant a beam from the uprising sun struck full across her stern and fell on the fluttering folds of the Stars and Stripes; and on the raised, gilt letters on her hull were the words that meant safety, protection, and kindness to the erstwhile prisoners, for there, clear and sharp, was the name of the ship—the U. S. S. Princeton.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOMEWARD BOUND!

*"This be the verse you grave for me:
'Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."*
(—Robert Louis Stevenson.)

There were no "side-boys" drawn up to receive the members of the "Sapalo," but there were lots better things than "side-boys" in store for them, for, at the foot of the companion of the "Princeton," only a couple of feet above the water, stood a very excited boy, laughing joyously, but with big tears in his dark eyes, too. It was Pat Dean.

As one of the gunboat's cutters drew up alongside, Archie, standing in the stern-sheets, picked up Billy in his arms, and handed him to the waiting Pat, who, rather to the small boy's annoyance, kissed him.

"Billy, you little *darling*, you!" he cried happily, and then carried him, very gently, to the quarterdeck, and turned him over to

a young officer with a red line of velvet surrounding the two gold bars on his stiff, blue shoulder straps, marking him as a Passed Assistant Surgeon in the Navy.

After looking the boy over, this oracle voiced the opinion that he was doing nicely, and let him lie back in a low deck chair, carefully propped up with pillows.

In the meantime, all the others had gathered on the quarterdeck also, and Pat and Don had exchanged hugs worthy of two young bear cubs, and had then shaken hands any number of times, both talking at once. As to Archie, he sat quietly by the small Commodore, though he smiled very gladly at Pat. His heart was just a little too full to talk, I think.

The exuberant young souls who, in the main, made up the wardroom of the U. S. S. "Princeton," were all for giving them all manner of good times in their sacred precincts amidships, but the Captain, a Lieutenant Commander, though he laughed good-naturedly at their zeal, saw that Archie and his boys were too tired, and had been through too much, to be able to stand any

more, no matter how pleasant it might be, so he settled things by turning over his own cabin to them, ordered breakfast for them with great care (the first breakfast they had had before eleven o'clock since they had reached Colon), and then, with a quiet smile, left them, and joined the crestfallen ward-room at its meal, where he was just about as welcome as the fattest of garden toads.

After Archie and the ship's doctor had seen to Billy, and had got him to eat something (it was then past ten o'clock), they tucked him up, most comfortably, in the Captain's own bunk, where the little fellow was soon fast asleep. Then the doctor said a pleasant "Good morning," and absolutely flew to the wardroom, knowing that the most youthful Ensign on board would eat all the deviled kidneys if he did not show up at once, and Archie joined the boys in the Captain's charming cabin, in the extreme stern, with its portholes looking far out over the ocean, its brass work polished to a finish, and its creamy enamel as smooth and white as the Midshipman's firm skin.

Don sat on one side of the round table, with Pat as close to him as he could get, while Tom rested on a lounge, not feeling very fit, but drinking the excellent coffee that the little Filipino mess-boy served him with great enjoyment, all the same. They were just boys, these three; real, normal, wholesome boys, and they had had their troubles, but, since their aggregate ages only amounted to some forty-seven years, they were now quite riotously happy, skylarking, rough-housing most gayly, while they ate, and living entirely for the present day; their troubles now nothing but a great adventure to them, their future a wonderful mirage of healthy fun.

Archie, for the life of him, could not help entering into their jollity. He was only too glad that it was so, and he was amazed, and a little appalled, too, at the enormous number of hot batter cakes that Don and Pat were consuming. They were having an eating race, so they informed him, and just as soon as Tom felt better, they planned to have another, whereupon the mess-boy threw up his hands and fled.

“ But how in the name of the Flying Dutchman did you find us ? ” Don asked, giving the Bishop’s son a punch in the stomach — they were constantly punching each other, these two, “ sort of letting off steam,” as the Middie explained.

“ Why, it was all jolly curious ! ” Pat replied, his mouth very full of hot cakes.

“ Just hold up a second, Patsie ! ” Don chuckled. “ And tell Mr. Archie about your romance on Lover’s Retreat, with the fair Ezabelita. Haven’t heard about that, have you, sir ? Well, it’s *more* fun ! ” and he went off into shouts of laughter.

“ Aw, shut up ! ” Pat blurted out, quite abashed, but, maybe because he was such a jolly, sweet tempered youngster, and realized that Archie was still greatly troubled, he retold much of his awful weeks, marooned with La Preciosa’s granddaughter, and, though he blushed a lot during the story, he told it awfully well, for he couldn’t help seeing how funny it was, he was just that kind of a boy, and he was rewarded by hearing the tutor laugh until the tears came into

his eyes, while the pirate boy giggled joyously on his sofa.

“What on earth did you do with her, Patsie?” Archie chuckled.

Pat flushed, but stuck to his cheering propaganda like a man:

“She’s at home—at Taboga—with La Foula Preciosa,” he answered.

“*In the house, on the Plaza, opposite the dear little church of Corpus Christi!*” Don whooped—and Pat threw a piece of bread at him.

“Silly ass!” he grinned sheepishly. “Glad you think it’s so awfully funny! It wasn’t; it was beastly!”

“B-but you’re not a beast, you’re a little boy-angel,’ you know,” came a laughing voice from the regions of the sofa, whereupon Pat got up and sat on Tom’s brown head for a few seconds.

“It’s mean to tease you so, old fellow,” at last, from Archie, trying his best not to laugh any more. “Let these two young monkeys misbehave if they want to, but go ahead and tell us what Don asked you. It’s

just about the one sensible thing he's said in the last hour."

"What's that, sir?" from Pat, quite grateful for a diversion.

"Why, how did you come to find us, and how did you ever get off the island?"

Pat's brown eyes began to twinkle with fun, though he still was very pink.

"Why, you see, sir," he explained, "it was like this. Me and Ezabelita had been fussin' off and on for about a week, and—and makin' up again—Aw, shut, up, Don! or I won't talk any more. Make him stop, Mr. Archie!—Well, we had a grand rumpus one morning, an' I fancy I got most awfully mad, and—and said things, you know, 'cause—oh, well! anyway, that crazy girl said she was going to drown herself, so off she hikes for the sea, with me after her, on the trot. I was scared, ever so, 'cause I thought she really meant to do it. Might have known better, though! That's not Ezabelita's way! Oh, *no*, sir! Just before I got to the beach, a silly old bit of bamboo tripped me up, and down I went, head over heels, and rolled a goodish way out on to the soft sand. Before

I could scramble up, I heard that blamed girl laugh like the dickens, and, guess what? Why, blamed if there wasn't her old cayuca washed bang up on the shore! Maybe I didn't run then! and my heart just went wallopy-bang-thump, 'cause I was scared to death, for I saw what she was up to. Gosh! Wasn't I mad? "

"Why?" from Don. "Thought you'd have been tickled silly to have the cahuca again."

"Why? Well, 'cause I guess I know Eza-belita heaps and lots better than you fellows do. She got to the dug-out before I could, and hanged if she doesn't do exactly what I expected! She pushes the old tub off, jumps in, and paddles to beat anything you ever saw, singin' her blamed, silly, old 'Tanta tierra y tanto mar' fit to scare the very pelicans, and laughin' ever so.

" 'You come back here,' I yelled.

" 'Oh, yes,' she sings out, real sweetly, 'I'm coming back, to-morrow, or the day after; when you're not so sulky! I'm going to Taboga now—to get some chickens from the Americano at the sanitarium' (bet she

swiped 'em!), 'and I'll look for your gold ring, too, as I go past Ancon!'

"Then she lets out that durned 'Tra-la-lal-ye-o' of hers, and off she goes, cool as a cucumber."

"Well, Mr. Archie, believe it or not, but I 'most cried. I was pretty miserable, and awfully cut up about you fellows, and I was half crazy to get off to Panama and try to get help for you—and there was that old cayuca rollin' 'round in the ocean, and me high and dry on the island.

"It was just awful the rest of that day—I bet I'm no end grey headed on account of it!—but, well, around about four o'clock, blamed if here isn't Ezabelita, paddlin' like mad, and yellin' fit to beat anything you fellows ever heard!

"'I found it!' she sings out, soon's as she was within hearing.

"'Found what, you silly?' I yelled back, still no end mad.

"'Your gold ring!' she bawled, 'but I couldn't bring it to you, 'cause it ain't in Ancon cove; it's on the hand of the fat old

Chino that keeps the store called "La Mano del Dios." ' Then I *was* excited!

"After I'd helped her to beach the cayuca, and had sat down bang on the top of it, so she couldn't run off with it again, I asked her what that Chink looked like? She told me, described him to a 'T,' and it made me sick! I knew bang off that it was the same chap that had tried to do for me on the 'Sapalo,' and, just for a second, I—I was scared to death! Funny! I was, though! She said he'd been away from Taboga, and had only got back a few days before. Then I told her we'd just have to get over to Panama right off, and she said 'all right.' She was ever so nice about it, and I—I was no end grateful—so I—I——" and he stopped, an uncomfortable flush on his brown skin.

"Well?" from all three listeners at once.
"Go on, Pat. What did you do?"

"I thanked her!" quite gruffly from Master Pat, pink to his ears. "She was perfectly rippin' about our leaving the island this time, and she had been so awfully jolly to me, too. Well, we got into that dug-out,

and off we scooted, Ezabelita paddlin', 'cause she was lots better at it than me. We got on lovely till we were almost at Uriva, when we sighted an outgoing steamer, with a white hull and a sort of yacht rig, and nothing will do, of course, but that silly must run astern of her, to ride the swells in her wake. I just knew we'd capsize, and we did, like any fellow with half sense might have known, but both of us are good enough swimmers, so we kept afloat till the steamer hove to, lowered a boat, and picked us up, wet as rats, only as I didn't have on a thing 'cept my white pants, it didn't make much difference."

"Well, the steamer was the "Princeton," and wasn't Captain Rollins bully to us? Oh, just! Then, after I'd told him all about the scrap in the cove, and Ezabelita had chimed in with the old man and my ring, the Captain had the gunboat brought about, and we went bang to Panama, saw the United States Minister, and the Consul, too; sent the Panamanian authorities over to Taboga after that old Chink, only I bet they never get him, and then steamed all 'round looking for you fel-

lows—to Urivá, Otoki, even San José Rock (beastly little place to climb, San José Rock!), the Pearl Islands, everywhere; and just about when I was pretty near crazy, in we put to this island, and dropped anchor for the night, 'cause Captain Rollins noticed a silly looking cross, done in black charcoal, against one of the biggest gray rocks in the channel, and this morning we—we——” But his brown eyes suddenly filled, and his voice got husky, so, with a very shaky little grin, he leaned over and punched Don once more.

They were all rather quiet for a bit, but then the incorrigible Don broke the silence:

“And where in thunder is Ezabelita?” he demanded.

“Oh, we left her at Taboga, you know. She lives there, don't she?”

“Sure she does! And so, after all she did for you, you've gone and put her out of your young life forever, have you, you old curly-head? I think that's mean!”

“Silly ass!” from Pat, with a rather guilty grin. “No, I haven't; not exactly! She was jolly good to me, and to all of us, as

it turns out, wasn't she? Well, we're still awfully good pals! Really! And—and we're going to write to each other when I get back to Eton."

Don and the 'Good Little Devil' began to giggle, and Master Pat's eyes dropped in sulky shyness, but Archie only smiled a little.

"Good for you, Pat!" he said quietly. "You did just right, I think. God knows we all owe Ezabelita more than we can ever repay her. Now, don't we, fellows?" and Tom's and the Midshipman's "You bet!" was said with grave heartiness, so that Pat felt comforted.

"High-ho!" Archie yawned. "It's nearly noon! 'How time do fly,' as the little girl said; that is, when a fellow's comfortable, and knows that his kids are all safe! Feeling better, Tom?"

"I'm feelin' great, Mr. Archie!" the once-upon-a-time pirate boy answered happily, smiling up from his cushions. "Why, hully gee! I guess I've got a right to feel good, haven't I? Huh? Why, fellow, I'm goin' *home*! We're all of us goin' home! An' I'll have a real, sure 'nough home now, you bet!

You said I could stay with you, after you'd turned our Commodore over to his folks; an' I can, can't I?"

"Of course you can! Didn't I say we'd always stick together, you and I, that time over in the bungalow among the poinsettias? And we'll alway live 'happy ever after,' and be 'awfully good pals'—like Patsie, here, and Ezabelita, and — Hullo! Listen to that! It's the first time in ages that I've heard that sound without jumping! Fact!" And he smiled a little grimly, as over the quiet waters of the Pacific Ocean came the familiar sound — Eight Bells!

CHAPTER XXIV

“ BEN BO BOHNS ”

*“ You’ll see her tiering canvass in sheeted silver spread;
You’ll hear the long-drawn thunder ’neath her leaky
figurehead.*

*While far, so far above you, her tall poop-lanterns
shine,*

*Unvexed by wind or weather like candles ’round a
shrine.”*

*“ Hull down—hull down and under—she dwindles to
a speck,*

*With noise of pleasant music and dancing on her
deck.*

*All’s well—all’s well aboard her—she’s left you far
behind*

*With a scent of old-world roses, and a fog that ties
you blind.”*

(—Rudyard Kipling.)

Archie rose to his legs, and stretched himself with a feeling of well being, and peace that gave even a good stretching a sensation of luxury.

“ You fellows do what you want, just so you don’t wake the Commodore,” he said lazily. “ Personally, I’m for another shower bath, and a good wallow in a tub, too.”

“ Me, too, sir! ” from Tom, uncurling himself from the sofa. “ Room for another fellow, Mr. Archie? ”

“ I should say so, Tom! Now listen, you two young heathen! ” to Pat and Don. “ Talk all you want to, but for Pete’s sake don’t disturb Billy.”

“ They jus’ can’t do that, Mr. Archie,” came the small Commodore’s voice, issuing from the tiny, inner cabin of the Captain’s snug suite, and it proved just three things: first, that Billy was awake; second, that Billy had been listening; third, that Billy felt much better.

Archie, his good-looking, brown face smiling broadly, and showing how joyously he accepted this last fact, immediately dove into the inner cabin, where he and Billy talked for about five minutes, and very delightfully, too, to judge from the happy chuckles of the big, young tutor, and the enraptured squeals and giggles from the ten-year-old, and a sound like unto a fly-weight member of the “ ring ” at work on a well inflated bag, the sound being the result of sundry affectionate, if remarkably sturdy

punches dealt by Billy with the fist of his well arm in the pit of Archie's tough, flat stomach, a sure sign of especial affection on the small Commodore's part.

"Why, fellows!" Archie laughed, absolutely frolicking through the cabin as he began shedding his clothes preparatory to his bath, "the kid's lots and lots better. Why, Gee! he can punch me 'til it almost hurts. Now, isn't that dandy? Oh, I *am* so glad, you know! Peel off, Tommy! Pitch us those bath towels, please Patsie! Thanks! Look here! see if you two fellows can't entertain Billy while Tom and I clean up again. Far as that goes, I know I couldn't keep either of you away from our Commodore's bunk, now you know he's awake."

"'Course you couldn't, sir!" the Middy grinned. "But look here! Tell this old crazy-head to be good, and not to cut up in there with Billy. Why, Mr. Archie! that boy doesn't care *what* he says, once he gets a good start, and I'd hate him to tell the Commodore stuff for Gospel that the rest of us know is simply romance à la

Patsie Dean. He started to spin the kid a yarn one time, coming down on the 'Colon,' and say! it beat Arsene Lupin to a standstill!"

"Oh, Pat's been through so much, same as the rest of us, that I don't think there's any danger, now-a-days, of his stringing my Commodore," and the tutor strolled off toward the bathroom, towel girt, and beautiful in the perfection of his lusty, pink and brown skinned huskiness, looking for all the world like a tousled headed, boyishly skylarking combination of a very young Greek god, and an exulting Prep school boy, his bare feet, big, but well shaped, assisting the big, sinewy legs above them in a most gleeful sort of prancing shuffle as he waltzed Tom about in a sheer overflow of happiness in time to the shouting of the Midshipman, and the thrilling beauty of the small Commodore's still drowsy voice, both singing at the top of their lungs, even though Billy was still sleepy, Pat and Archie joining in, and Tom, too, the song being one dear to the hearts of all Annapolis boys the wide world over, the

song that always accompanies the great "snake dance" at graduation, during June week at the Naval Academy, and just now the Midshipman, and the others, too, felt that no song could better voice the gladness they all felt:

" ' Thank God, we're out of the wilderness,
Out of the wilderness,
Out of the wilderness,
Thank God, we're out of the wilderness,
No more rivers to cross! ' "

At the end of this spirited bacchanal, Archie waltzed "the Good, Little Devil" into the small bathroom, Tom feeling, rightly enough, that now that Billy was awake, the original three boys of the "Sapalo" should be allowed a chance to talk just among themselves, and, also, Tom hated, in these, to him, terribly strange surroundings, to get too far away from his grown-up friend, the tutor, even if said grown-up friend was, in his present flow of happiness, skylarking like a Prep school boy at the end of a victorious football game. Oh, well! Archie was only twenty-two, remember.

Left to themselves, with Tom in the shower, and Archie in the tub, Don looked at Pat dolefully enough since the tutor's word picture of that dark-headed young gentleman's transformation.

Pat giggled, and struck an attitude, humming, à la Hugo's most wonderfully lovable, heroic, little *gamin*:

“ ‘Joi est mon caractère,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;
Misère est mon trousseau,
C'est la faute à . . .

Rousseau', like the song says? Not by no means, Donny! *C'est la faute à* Mr. Archie, if you can locate any *misère* about this boy, what! He *is* jolly well right, though, of course. I say, See my wings, old dear? Awfully swanky, what! If I had my clothes off, and my shoulders nice and bare, like Mr. Archie, and your Pirate Boy just now, you'd hear the bally things, Don. *Flap, flap!* just as plain. Fact!”

“Wish I had shoulder muscles like you, anyhow, Patsie,” spoke up the Commodore from his bunk. “Come on in here, and talk

to me, you fellows, wont you, please? Thanks. You got the nicest built legs an' shoulders of any boy at Eton, Pat. Honest he has, Don. All the fellows say so."

"Does a chap a pile of good to be husky—I don't think!" the Bishop's son grunted, speaking very soberly now. "Husky? Why, men dear! I'd give a leg any time to be clever like you, Don, or like Mr. Archie, or like our Commodore will be one of these days. Jolly lot of good my muscle did you fellows when you were in trouble, and needed me, what! I didn't help you one bit. All I can do is to haul things around, and an elephant can do that lots better than I."

He looked out, solemnly enough now, through one of the open ports, but nothing of interest showed itself to his brown-eyed gaze; only a small fishing fleet of natives, and they were doing more idling than fishing, apparently.

"Fancy I'm not feeling like yarn spinning," he said at last, "but I'll read to you, Billy, if you'll just curl up on that bunk, and give me a place to sit down."

“ Oh, *will* you, Pat? Honest? the overjoyed Commodore squealed, and he at once curled himself into as much of a ball as the build of a ten-year-old boy will allow, the whole of him quite suggestive of a yellow-headed, tousled haired, little armadillo, while Pat smiled down at him, and then went back into the cabin in search of a book.

“ Here’s about all I can find, fellows,” the Bishop’s boy called, and, a second later, he appeared, a copy of Kipling’s poems in one hand, and a tiny volume of Aristophanes in the other, in the original Greek.

Sitting down on the foot of Billy’s bunk, while Don took a folding stool near the small boy’s head, Pat began to read the scene in *The Frogs* where Bacchus is trying to get across the Styx, and has to wait while a corpse and its bearers haggle with Charon over the passage fee, Charon’s final demand for two drachmas so inflaming the indignation of the corpse that it calls out haughtily to those carrying it: “ Bearers, move on! ” whereupon, if I remember rightly, old Charon immediately drops his price, for, in

a colloquialism of the day, the corpse had "called his bluff."

Pat translated from the Greek with a fair amount of ease—an English boy in the upper forms of one of the great public schools knows his Greek to the full as well as his American school-boy cousins know some modern language, and Billy and the Midshipman chuckled delightedly over the good fun of the play, Don, however, enjoying it much more than the Commodore as it progressed.

"Wish you had some more books like *Treasure Island*," the ten-year-old sighed at last, "it—it sort of fits in with the Bay of Panama, an' everything down this way, so near the line. I say! if you fellows sort of boosted me up 'longside this porthole above my head, would I see anything nice, or interestin', or somethin'?"

Don rose to his legs, and glanced out to sea.

"Why, we'll lift you up if you say so, Commodore," he smiled, "but I give you my word there's nothing to watch. Only a little native fishing fleet, and they're so

filled with *poco tiempo*, and *mañana por la mañana* that if they catch a fish to-day they'll be doing wonders. Not that they'll worry; that crowd never does, you know."

"Cheer up, Don!" from Pat, peering over the Middy's shoulder, "here comes another cajuca to join the fleet—we're off Taboga, Commodore—and I say! that chap with the paddle must be a lineal descendant of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, for 'he drives furiously.' Never saw a cajuca handled so well."

"Not even by Ezabelita?" from Don.
"No?"

"Aw, shut up!" a bit sullenly, from the Bishop's boy.

"Is it worth being hoisted up to see, Pat?" Billy asked.

"No, Commodore, it isn't. In the first place, friend Jehu has slowed down to normality, and, in the second place, as you jolly well know, young 'un, one cajuca looks like every other cajuca, so that's that. That crowd down there hasn't enough spirit to bag a guinea pig, let alone a catch of fish."

"Well, it's a peaceful looking lot, Patsie,"

the Middy sighed, "and so I take off my hat to them," and he waved his duck cap to the fishing fleet that was now dropping a'stern, and grinned a cheerful, rather freckled grin, and the boatmen below him, their cajucas dancing in the gunboat's wake, laughed up at him, and waved their straw hats with a laughing, perfectly friendly: "*Buenos dies, Señor! Viva el muchacho Americano! Ohè, la foula!*" and the husky Middy laughed, and blushed a little, too.

The "Princeton" began to swing around the island in a big circle, standing off considerably, however, in order to avoid shoals, and, Taboga being a sizable island, their circling took time, but the Captain had decided that should Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat be, by any chance, still hiding in its midway jungle, he would let the Chinaman know that his Blue Jackets were very much awake. Having circled the island, however, he planned making for the anchorage between Flemenco and Panama City, or, if the tide suited, one of the Pacific Mail's berths at La Boca (now-a-days, Balboa).

“ Say! Bet those brown boys will be surprised to see us again in the next half hour, as we steam through them a second time after our swing 'round the island,” Don laughed, still waving his white cap through the port, and calling friendly gibes in none too perfect Spanish to a husky fisher boy of fifteen, who grinned, and splashed water up at him with his paddle, all in lazy good nature. “ They'll think we are following them, fellows.”

“ Not if they know my opinion of 'em, Donny,” Pat smiled, reseating himself close to the small Commodore's feet. “ Why should we want to waste our time, 'specially with a half sick Commodore aboard, chasing, 'round Taboga after a lot of *poco tiempos*? Why, Gosh! I'd just about as lief chase the 'Flyin' Dutchman' or Ben Bo Bohns—jolly sight rather, on the whole. We'd at least not go to sleep chasing old Ben.”

“ *Who's Ben?* ” in immediately complete interest, from the Commodore, sitting bolt upright without the least assistance—they were doubling the 'Moro' by this time.

“ You’d probably find him within the upper left-hand corner of Patsie’s head, Commodore,” the Midshipman grunted, with some grimness.

“ No such a thing! ” with considerable vehemence, from the Bishop’s boy. “ He didn’t really live, I guess, Billy, but he’s a tradition, sort of, like ‘ The Flyin’ Dutchman,’ or ‘ the Ancient Mariner,’ or folks like that, and lots of times there’s a certain amount of truth at the beginnin’ of these old tales, my Pater says, even though the tales themselves are all twisted out of the truth finally. They must have some sort of a beginnin’, you know. I know I’ve always been awfully keen for these old sea myths, and I fancy I like this one, about ‘ Ben Bo Bohns’ best of the lot; it’s short enough to grip a fellow from the beginnin’ to the end, and you don’t have to push it, it pushes you, you know. Chap named More wrote it—Brookes More—my Pater knows him. It’ll give you a thrill all right, Commodore. Really. Do I know it all by heart? Well, *rather!* Chap can’t forget a thing like that. Hope he publishes it some day. No, a boy

just can't forget stuff like this thing of More, no more than he'd forget 'The Mary Gloster,' or 'The Galley Slave,' or 'If'—though the Pater holds out that his friend's work is heaps more like Lord Tennyson's in most things—sort of misty. Old tapestries, you know. Awfully jolly, and old, and perfectly *rippin'* colors—dim and dusky like a Millais, and yet as packed-jammed full of colors as that Fortuny at my Grandmother's — Lady Emily Tollinglower; *you* know, Billy—*gorgeous!* but, oh, I don't know, fellows! silvered sort of spider web over it all. My Pater's right, too. That *is* the way lots of his friend's stuff is. And jolly! Well, *rather*. Last year the Head, at Eton, had some of us readin' 'The Atalanta' of Swinburne, and the work of this friend of my Pater makes me feel just the same as when we boys struck that chorus in 'The Atalanta,' 'When the hounds of Spring are on Winter's traces'—*you* know. Makes a boy's body feel hot all over, and hungry for everything that's only half known, and yet you want it just no end. An' I say! there's a cloud, sort of dank, and

wetty mist, and all pearl, an' it makes a boy feel like he's in that cloud, his face, anyhow, and his skin feels wet with it, and it's only make-believe in a book you're readin', but—well, you chaps just listen to this one little bit of More's stuff, will you? "

" ' Oh, what is the reason God willeth
That nothing shall ever dissever
The last of lost Eden from Lilith—
Lost Eden surrounded,
Secreted and bounded
By river and mountain and sea? ' "

" But ' Ben Bo Bohns,' Patsie! " from Billy, fast becoming exasperated.

" Oh, *him?* " Pat smiled, though his darkly browned skin was a bit flushed with eagerness—he was a real musician, remember, and no musician living can help loving Brookes More any more than he can help loving Swinburne—" Why, I'll tell you right off, Commodore. Right-o! I say, Don! Take that yellow head of yours out of that port, and listen."

" Of course I will," the Middy laughed, drawing in his head at once. " And I really

want to hear, Patsie, if it's going to be anything like that 'Lost Eden' thing just now. Don't know what that meant, but the words all sort of *sing*. I only looked out, anyway, to see where we were. We're almost 'round the island, and I bet our lazy fishing fleet's off our forward port quarter. Go ahead, Patsie! That's a good fellow."

And Pat Dean, leaning a little forward, his heavy set, brown skinned, young body alert, and gaining tenseness as his recitation progressed in the plain, straightforward way that is one of its greatest charms, began, his eyes looking out to the blue sky, and the distant sea line on the horizon, all he could see through the open port above Billy's head, while the "Princeton's" siren screamed out a warning, probably to the fishing fleet now close under her bows, its wailing shrillness a first rate accompaniment to—

The Nautical Ballad of Ben Bo Bohns

“ ‘ Ho! Ben Bo Bohns of the Will o’ the
Wisp,
He sails to the phantom west!
For thirteen years and thirteen months

He's chased that phantom quest!
Quoth Ben, ' We've sailed from the rim
of the east,
From the port of Kalkut Town,
And steered our ship on the shining sea
To the west where the day goes down.

“ ‘ For thirteen years and thirteen months
And thirteen days to the dot,
We've steered to the west, but the west
remains
That same far distant spot.
Crowd on all sail, you lubber crew!
With thirteen sails to the breeze,
In the thirteenth hour of the thirteenth
day
We'll sail the Western Seas! —

“ ‘ What ails you now, my Bos'n Bold,
What trouble is in your eye? '
‘ O Captain Ben, again and again
That wizard ship goes by;
Her hulk is red and her crew is dead,
And she's weather-beat with age;
She scuds in the gale, with never a sail,
Where the western billows rage.

“ ‘ Crowd on more sail, we'll never fail;
'Tis the Flying-Dutchman ship;

She leads the way to Phantom Bay
Where the western waters dip.'
' O Captain Ben,' said the helmsman then,
' There's another ship that's queer! '
' Have never a fear,' quoth Ben Bo Bohns,
' Tis The Ancient Marineer;

“ ‘ 'Tis the ship of The Ancient Marineer,
She sails the fading west,
Clap on all sail, in calm or gale,
She leads us to our quest.
Then in a fright the Midshipmite,
O Captain, Ben Bo Bohns,
In the first monsoon, if you sing that
tune,
We'll go to Davie Jones.' ”

Was it a faint lapping of warm Pacific waters, or maybe the slight, pulsing slush of a cajuca's paddle so close below the curving, white stern, or was it only in their own minds—an echo of their thrillingly pounding hearts, answering beat for beat to the witchery of the poem's sweepingly vivid word pigments? The boys could have heard anything now, anything at all, trusting their actual, every-day senses for just nothing, and their wide, grave, young

eyes were full of their breathlessly robust romance, called up by the rhyme of the sea yarn, and the rhythm of it; a modern Saga. The great, lumberingly high-pooped, old "Dutchman," wind screaming, screaming, screaming through her ghostly rigging, her gaping ports all a'glare with the evil, red lights within her rotting hold. And that—that yonder! The weather-tossed, salt-rimed weariness of Coleridge's dream ship, scudding crazily, with darting, purposeless swiftness before the wind, forever paying a never ending penalty for the dead "Albatross," plunging far over the choppy, gray-green waters of the distant horizon on her lonely way to still other seas. The ship under them a graceful, white steeled American gunboat? Never! Barque o' Dreams. Frigate of Fancies. A galleon laden with a young boy's wish-fulfillments. Romance. Some one of Olaf's fleet, maybe; or perhaps the "Golden Hind," or "the Vengeance," with the golden headed beauty of a youthfully stalwart Amyas Leigh of Burrough tramping up there, above decks, his blue eyes steely, peering through the lashing

spume for the foamy, sweeping approach of the mighty, ill-fated Armada, under the golden flag of royal Spain. Was there really the faintest grating of water-softened wood against the steel plates at the gunboat's stern, or was it the thundering crash of the dreadful "Dutchman's" spars as grim, old Van der Decken brought her about for another heart-breaking attempt at doubling the cape? Some real menace reaching out a cold, wet hand to lay, in deadly fashion, on those warm, healthy, young bodies, even within their floating, steel fortress? or the fanciful mirage of a great sea yarn, told by a really great artist?

Pat continued, his voice warm, eager, fine; every ounce of his manly boyishness sweeping him along in his complete earnestness, Don and Billy following wide-eyed, their lips slightly parted, not just hearing a legend of the sea, but, through the rhyming lilt, seeing the hardy Skipper, the dubious Boson, the frightened, distraught, little Midshipman, and feeling the sting of the wind-swept, salty water as it whipped their healthy, young faces:

“ ‘ Fear not my lad, ’tis not that bad,
We’ll welcome breeze or gale;
If a phantom ship can weather the storm,
The Will o’ the Wisp can’t fail.’ —
They stretched the sheets till the cordage
sang,
The crazy crew sang, too;—
The crazy ship with a shudder and a
moan,
To the west like an arrow flew.

“ ‘ Far, far to the west, on that strange
quest,
They sail the Western Sea,
To join those other phantom ships,—
God save that phantom three!
O mates beware, foul days or fair,
Beware of Ben Bo Bohns!
For if you see that awful three
You’ll sup with Davie Jones.’ ”

A shriek, the indescribably horrible kind caused by a very loud, high, adolescent scream of fear, choked off into a bubbling wail by blood suddenly entering the throat, and the boys were all on their feet, sweat breaking out over their bodies at once. Even Billy, his hurt shoulder forgotten in his horror, stood, his small, bare feet on the

cabin floor, his well arm clinging to Don. There was a stampede of running feet from the wardroom, and the sound of the small Marine guard tumbling down the narrow, iron companion from the deck above, and a moment later the outer door of the Captain's quarters burst open, to show that officer himself, with four Marines, and the entire wardroom mess close at his heels, the Marines with their sidearms clear.

"You stay with the Commodore, Don," Pat yelled, and dashed out into the larger cabin to join the others, while the Midshipman, his face set, and very white, simply took the small boy in his arms and hugged him protectingly, and Billy cried bitterly, his face hidden in the older lad's shoulder.

The boys of the "Sapalo" all felt dazed, but not so the Captain of the "Princeton."

"Where's young Spenway?" he demanded curtly.

"Mr. Archie?" from all three boys at once. "Why, he's taking a bath, sir. So's Tom."

"If he was doing that, he'd be out here, the same 'as we," the Captain snapped.

“Here! Let’s have a look in this bathroom of mine, and let’s be lively, too,” and he sprang to the bathroom door, but it was locked with a bolt on the inside. “Here!” the old officer called, “you Marines get that open, and make it lively—on the hop!” and almost at once four husky shoulders flung themselves against the white enamel door, and it gave, with a sharp, tearing sound. The port, directly over one of the twin screws at the stern, was wide open, the heavy glass in its metal casing having been entirely unscrewed. On the white tiled floor, from the shower to the port, and on the side of the small tub, that stood a good eighteen inches above the floor on four wrought iron legs, a good deal of fresh, warm blood was smeared, and tracked, showing plainly enough where a pair of bare heels had been dragged, and, too, the clear imprint of the toes and ball of two very big, bare feet—undoubtedly Archie’s. Archie had taken into the bathroom, along with his supply of towels, a suit of white pajamas, intending to slip them on after his bath, and curl up by Billy for a nap. The coat of

these pajamas was hanging from a peg, but the pants were missing.

“Of course they got through that unscrewed port,” the Captain said angrily to his first officer, “but it must have been an uncommonly tight fit for that yellow-headed youngster’s big body. Hardly see how he could have done it. Still, since nobody came out of this door, it was bolted on the inside, through the port, they must have slid. Have her hove-to at once, Mr. Seldon; put a Marine guard on duty in this cabin of mine to take care of these boys—No, no!” very testily, “you can’t help, and you won’t help, and I’m not going to have anything happen to the rest of you, so that’s flat. Place your guard, Lieutenant Pokey!” to a First Lieutenant of Marines. “The rest of us, gentlemen, are all for the deck. Seldon, I want you and Harcourt on the bridge with me, *pronto*,” and out the Captain strode, his officers at his heels, leaving two very young, very brown-faced Marines on guard mount, one of whom, a boy of not more than eighteen, after a briefly whispered conference with his mate,

left that young gentleman very grimly on guard, and, with a smile on his boyishly smooth, deeply tanned face, went over to Don, saluted, and then relieved him of the still sobbing, little Commodore, and, taking the small boy into his own arms, comforted him with the skill of a woman, and, seated at the Captain's mahogany table, with one wary eye on the door, he stuck innumerable pins into the Captain's blotter, and said it was to be a football game, and that Billy's side had the kick-off.

Don, more grateful than he could say to the tact of this very youthful "Devil Dog," walked doggedly into the bathroom and stuck his sleek, yellow head out of the porthole, looking down at the churning of the screws, and the rippling wake behind the white-hulled "Princeton," but he suddenly withdrew his head, his face a sickly, grayish white, for the gunboat had come about, and was now traveling almost exactly over her course of a few minutes before, once more heading for the bobbing, jolly, little fishing fleet, and there, on the surface of the water, a bit to one side of the present lane

the ship was making, rose and fell the deep, smooth swells of the Bay of Panama, and it seemed to the Midshipman that the swells, in certain spots, held a dull, painfully red stain.

CHAPTER XXV

WHEN EAST MEETS WEST

*"A sinuous monster in there pent,
Pervading the sinister air—
The breath of a dragon, a serpent
That fetters the life that is there?"*
(—Brookes More.)

"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"
(—1st Kings, 22, v. 21.)

What had happened? Simply this: Every inhabited island in the Bay of Panama harbored at least one of "Mr. Mandarin's" confederates, these gentlemen occupying all manner of social stations, from a toothless, repulsively hideous leper on the coast, at Palaseco, and a darkly tressed, young lady of rather dusky complexion and undoubted charm, much given to crimson double hybiscus blossoms worn most fetchingly behind one tiny ear (a terrible coquette among any young American Blue Jackets who now and then landed for a few hours "Liberty" among the Pearl Islands), to a tall, ascetic looking *Padre* in a mouldy,

black soutane, who dwelt perpetually in the city of Panama, and, also, perpetually under the grim displeasure of his Bishop on the Plaza del Cathedral, in the Episcopal Palace. As to Taboga, that little mountain island fairly bristled with confederates, at least a dozen members of "Mr. Mandarin's" own particular *Tong* being among the number. But closer than all the rest, was the junior partner in one of the finest Chinese importing houses in Panama, a young Chinaman of twenty-six, a Manchu, about six feet two inches tall, grave and courteous of manner, splendidly handsome as to face, in an Asiatic way, and most glorious as to physique. He was quite a philosopher, a high-bred, cultured, young fellow, and he and Kum-Sing were as close as father and son, and the fat, old man had, also, done most material service to his father during the Boxer unpleasantness. This big, finely made youngster, twirling the little cap of his high social position by its red button on the top, received the relay messages as to the information Pat had given on his return from his island with Ezabe-

lita, and, after a night spent in the dense jungle, near the hut of the leper at Palaseco, he and the fat, old Kum-Sing moved courageously about the task they had set themselves.

Lying flat on their stomachs at the foot of the Black Cross above Ancon cove, on that peak of Taboga, they watched the "Princeton" making her leisurely way toward the city, via Taboga itself, then, joining the small fishing fleet of four pangas, manned entirely by henchmen of Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, they pulled out quite close to the approaching gunboat, fished stolidly as she passed, and then, seeing, as they knew perfectly well they would, a painter hanging from one of the port-holes at the "Princeton's" stern, left there most obediently by a spry, little Japanese mess-boy, a nephew of Kum-Sing's friend in Yokohama, they grabbed it, the panga wallowing crazily in the wake from the gunboat's screws, and the young sage, Liang Fu, climbed that painter like a monkey, while the placid, old gentleman below him, the panga always hidden by the graceful, yacht-like curve of

the "Princeton's" stern, kept her away from the thrashing of the screws by the most expert use of a boat-hook. This had all been planned the moment the gunboat had received her sailing orders from the American Minister at Panama, at which time "Mr. Mandarin" at once knew his plans had missed fire, and that his crew at the far-off island were done for. Being, however, too the full as great a philosopher as the young Liang Fu, this worthy, old gentleman in no way troubled his head about them, that is with one exception. Tom had been false to him, and Tom should pay the penalty, and the penalty was to be caught, wounded, and then nursed back to health by the dreadful, old leper at Palaseco, the open wound the boy was to receive being entirely able to admit the dreadful infection that is so much worse than death. Besides, of what further use was Tom? The old man's carefully laid plans, nursed so patiently for the last few years, were quite ruined now, and, too, Tom was fourteen, very nearly fifteen, and his boy voice would break almost any day, so even the pleasure of

his singing—and it had been a keen pleasure—could no longer be counted on. As to possibly being killed himself, that never had worried Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat in the past, and it certainly did not worry him now. One thing only was certain, Tom should pay the penalty. Kum-Sing, and the good-looking, gravely courteous, young Liang Fu had talked it all over very quietly over a really delicious cup of tea, and Liang Fu said, with a most gracious bow, that he was most eternally honored to be of service to his honorable friend, the mighty benefactor of his illustrious father, and the old fellow, with a courteously bland, little smile, and a gentle wave of one fat hand, assured Liang Fu that such a speech must greatly rejoice the ashes of that young man's exalted parent, now gone to the land of the golden dragons and peacocks, there to rest among his glorious ancestors, and that, furthermore, he counted Liang Fu one of the five most perfect gentlemen he had ever had the extreme happiness of knowing, the other four being, respectively, his friend in Yokohama, a world-famous psy-

chiatrist in Zurich, of whom he was very fond indeed, a diplomat in Paris, and an Anglican Bishop at whose palace he had spent many delightful weeks. After this very pleasant talk, then, both gentlemen betook themselves, by an overland route to Palaseco, and arranged with the leper for Tom's reception, and incarceration.

Once in the bathroom (the "Princeton" had been a private yacht once, and was just a converted gunboat, and her stern ports were simply huge, a regular eyesore to the rest of the Navy), Liang Fu measured the space under the bath-tub with a practical eye, and decided that his lean body could be flattened between it and the tiled floor, and in this uncomfortable position he waited placidly enough, with the patience handed down to him by centuries of Orientals who had one and all cultivated this virtue to the last degree. He knew perfectly well that, sooner or later, Tom would come in, and he and Tom knew each other very well, both in China, and here. In fact it was Liang Fu whose skilled musicianship had perfected Tom's beautiful, boy voice in the difficult

coloratura passages in *With Verdure Clad*, from "Mr. Mandarin's" favorite oratorio, *The Creation*. He avoided bringing any firearms on board with him—Tom's wound should be an open cut—but he did bring along a tiny, steel knife, with an ivory handle, a knife intended, really, for an ink eraser.

When Archie came in first, and, tossing off his bath towel from around his thighs, very coolly turned on the hot water in the tub, young Liang Fu simply turned his head very much to one side, and observed that young gentleman's ankles, and hairy shins with mild interest. Tom, however, who had followed the tutor, this representative of the old Manchu dynasty watched like a cat. He wished it was Tom who was to get into the tub, and Archie who was to take the shower, for the shower was in a sort of closet arrangement, with a three-quarter door of slats to it. Still, all it required was patience, patience!

Archie wallowed joyously in the hot bath, soaping his big body all over at least a dozen times for the sheer fun of the good feel of it to his brown skin, but since Tom had

finished his shower, and was eyeing the tub rather wistfully, he climbed out, drew some fresh water, and, laughing, Archie then dived into the shower closet, shutting the slat door behind him, and slipping home the small, brass bolt.

With Tom stretched out in the tub, rather sleepy from the pleasant warmth of the water, and Archie running the shower full tilt, with cheerfully noisy splashings, his broad back to the door, Liang Fu squirmed from under the tub, shot to a small pair of outer bolts to the shower bath, put there to hold the door securely shut in times of storm, and then grabbed Tom under both his wet armpits, and the youngster, recognizing the young sage at once, screamed in heart-stopping fear, and Liang Fu buried his little knife blade in the boy's rather thick neck, skillfully avoiding all big vessels, but making a hideous, bleeding wound all the same, so that blood spurted in a stream from the gashed flesh, and oozed out over the brown skin of the boy's throat, and, a second later, in a gush from the lad's still half-open mouth. Then

with Archie trying to force the three-quarter length door of the shower closet, which held well, Liang Fu dragged Tom to the porthole, the youngster's bare heels scraping the tiled floor, and pushed him—Tom had lost consciousness—head first into the capable arms of the waiting Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, and then followed him, going down the painter with a rush, and, as he knew he would, finding Kum-Sing tranquilly seated on a dirty sack, in which sack was a bleeding boy, about which with his plump, long-nailed fingers, he was artistically piling a huge catch of fish. The rest of the fishing fleet immediately closed in, the distance from the "Princeton" ever widening, and Liang Fu dropped anchor for a moment, and took up his line again, lit a short, corncob pipe, smiled at Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, and that capable, old gentleman slipped out of his few clothes, and dived, with the utmost placidity, over the side, swimming with the perfect ease of a Kanaka, for yards and yards at a time completely under water. It was a mile and a quarter to the point of Taboga on which

he purposed to land, but double that distance would not have bothered him one bit. Another panga now joined the fleet, it, like the rest, all ready for fishing, and as soon as it did so Liang Fu pulled out from the rest, the newly arrived boat still making the fleet count four, and stooping down, deftly set to work a small motor auxiliary so that his panga now raced for Taboga like a streak. When the "Princeton" finally doubled on her course, there were the four pangas of the fishing fleet as when she had first steamed past them, and by that time Liang Fu, Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat (whom the young sage had picked up), and the bloody sack were all on the beach, for it had taken a good many minutes for the Captain of the gunboat to confer in his cabin, have the bathroom door broken down by the Marine guard, and then get up to the bridge, and have his boat swung 'round in her course.

With Archie, however, it was different. He had, in about a minute, or two, succeeded in climbing over the door, and then, slipping his legs into his white pajama pants,

and knotting their cord around his waist, he had shot himself, with considerable squirming, and no little pain, through the open porthole, head first—he was stouter than Liang Fu—and only by a miracle avoiding being killed by the busy screws. One of the pangas picked him up. They were a dull, native lot, this particular set of Kum-Sing's henchmen, and they had no instructions about what to do if a very big, yellow-headed, young fellow, with almost no clothes on, splashed overboard among them, so one of them yanked him into his panga, whereupon Archie, shaking the water from his thick, golden crop, and out of his eyes, saw the fifth panga, with its motor auxiliary, racing shoreward. Feeling quite desperate, he grabbed an oar, crashed it down on the head of his rescuer, tossed him overboard, and, grabbing the other oar, set to work, while big tears filled his blue eyes, his lower lip caught between his white teeth, his face set and wretched, but his big muscled body swinging well between his knees with every deep stroke of his oars.

Nobody chased him, because everybody

knew that the "Princeton" was racing back under full steam, and the one safe thing for the fishing fleet was to sit tight where they were. As for Archie, he simply made for the shore of Taboga. What he would do there, he did not know, nor did he much care. Billy was safe on board the gunboat with the other boys, but Tom, the youngster who had really saved them all, and whom he had so gladly promised to be a big brother to, Tom was in the completely merciless hands of Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat.

He tumbled out of the panga before she grounded, and stumbled and splashed through the surf, knee deep, toward the beach. Neither Chinaman had any fire-arms about him, but Archie, of course, did not know that. If they shot him, well! he'd done his best for Tom. He'd never understood until now how much he loved that heavy set, brown-skinned, brown-headed "Pirate Boy," with his wide mouth, and frankly turned up, freckled nose. Why, any man would love to be pals with such a kid brother!

Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat was pulling

Tom from the sack by means of his sturdy, bare legs, and the boy was now conscious, the wound in his throat clotting, and the plump, thick-set body was shivering. He was crying a little, too. He was too weak, and his wounded throat made him feel too sick to fight much, but he struggled the very best he could, and he was, luckily, a very strong boy, now nearly fifteen. And "Mr. Manderin" allowed him to scuffle, just as a sleek cat plays with a mouse.

Archie, panting, wild-eyed, furious, sent an oar hurtling through the air, and it struck the fat, old fellow on the side of his head, and for a while he was stunned, dropping to the sand in a heap. But then, himself, like Archie, now stripped to his waist, Liang Fu sprang on the tutor, while Archie's feet and ankles were still hidden in the warm water. The big, twenty-two-year-old American stumbled, and then went down, the taller man on top of him.

Over and over again Archie broke the Chinaman's hold, but never for long, only he did manage to stagger out of the water onto the sand, the Chinaman clinging to

him, and there they fought their fight, a fight of primitive, sledge-hammer blows as in the days of the mighty Nieblungen, changing as often as possible from boxing to clinching, and Liang Fu at last, not only striking, but tearing, clawing at the firm, hard, young flesh under Archie's smooth, deeply tanned skin, digging viciously into his body where the yellow-headed, young fellow's straining muscles pitted into white dimples on his heavy, brown shoulders, and back, and chest.

Sweat, streams of it, tumbled over Archie's superb, brownly naked body, his sinews writhing, twisting under the skin, bare to his waist; streams of sweat glistened in great drops on the satiny shoulders, and drenching the deep breast, and the heaving, panting, laboring of his heavy stomach, whose muscles, under its tough, flat solidity, bunched themselves into a racing series of knots and cords in the horrible, clamoring need for air, and more air in this fight to a finish. Chest muscles, abdominal muscles, both labored terribly to give that straining, agonized, desperate, young body the pre-

cious breath it needed if it was to live, and if Tom was to live. But Liang Fu was just a shade the stronger, and very nearly as skillful. His breath scorched against Archie's wet face, their bodies, breasts, stomachs, legs, crushed, and twisted against each other. Pelicans screamed and flapped above them, their shrill cries sounding to Archie like ribald taunts. The hot sand flew from under his bare heels, and spurted from between his toes like gritty powder, and in spite of that pair of great, thrashing arms and straining shoulders, millions of tiny gnats enveloped him, clinging to his slippery, sweat-soaked body in a vast haze once his broken skin showed its trickle of warm, healthy blood. The deeply fluffy yellow hair on his head was tangled and clotted with blood from an oozing wound, the scalp torn by Liang Fu's clawing, merciless fingers, and battering fists; the muscles in his big legs twitched painfully under the smoothly brown skin, the hair on them matted, not only with blood from many small stabs where Liang Fu had cut his flesh with his small knife before he

finally wrenched it from his clenched fist, but, also, with flying, stinging sand, and the sweat from his own tortured body. But he fought on, furiously, brutally, violently, taking all the severe punishment that came to him like some young Spartan, and more than returning it, no thought of his boxing, or wrestling days back at college now left in his rumpled, golden head; only an agonizingly clear, ringing knowledge that he was trying to kill this other man, so that this other man could not kill him, and, through him, so dreadfully kill his adopted, boy brother, Tom.

At last, Archie, his heart pounding against his side, his head throbbing, the taste of his own blood now in his laboring throat, succeeded in getting the Chinaman's neck in the crotch of one big arm, in a stranglehold. Liang Fu, slowly strangling now, his neck crushing almost to the breaking point, screamed chokingly, and then became limp under Archie's arm, and Archie tossed him, in a queer, broken heap, on the sand, and as he did so he saw, though the blood in his blue eyes made vision very misty,

Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat lift himself rather dizzily to his feet, gaze out to sea for a second, and then, picking up the same oar that had stunned him, lift it above his head, and advance on Tom, and the fourteen-year-old, too utterly used to being always abjectly afraid of the fat, old Chinaman, just crouched back on his bare haunches, his sun-tanned, freckled face turned up imploringly, big tears tumbling down the bridge of his snubbed nose, his whole body, every inch of its plumply solid young flesh, quivering.

Archie called upon the remaining strength he possessed, and with every muscle in his big body crying out with agonizing pain, he crashed down upon Kum-Sing-Hong-Chong-Fat, wrenched the oar from him, and then, one horrified look at the old Asiatic's round face, and the oar dropped from his hands.

Kum-Sing's yellow, old face was very placid, a really sweet smile showed under his long, drooping mustache, but below the saffron-tinted skin a strange pallor had appeared, and the slanting, almond eyes were glazing. He actually chuckled, though

in his own peculiar, gentle way, but he swayed a bit uncertainly, too. He had read the dismay on Archie's good-looking, boyish face, and was clearly amused by it.

“ My esteemed friend in Yokohama has passed on to me an old Samurai saying, my dear boy,” he said, quite gently, “ and it is to this effect: *To die with honor is to live without dishonor.* And, do you know? I have always found the Japanese a very clever people, if a bit superficial at times. I believe them to be quite right in this instance, at all events. I took it the moment I came to, and realized you were killing Liang Fu. I always have carried two of them about with me—little, fat pills, you know. By the time your friend gets here,—See! two of his cutters are only about a quarter of a mile off shore now—‘ Mr. Mandarin’,” with his quaint, fat, old old smile, “ ‘ Mr. Mandarin ’ will be with his honorable ancestors in the land of the Golden Dragons and the Sacred Peacocks,” and again he smiled his old, rather slow smile, pleasantly, tranquilly, and then crumpled up at Archie's feet.

CHAPTER XXVI

ANCHORS AWEIGH!

*"Farewell, and adieu to you, fair Spanish ladies,
Farewell, and adieu to you, ladies of Spain!"*
(—Rudyard Kipling.)

The good ship "Colon," once-upon-a-time referred to by that late-lamented, old salt, Mr. Alfred Simmons, as "a tidy craft, though groggy," was most ably demonstrating said "grogginess" as she slung the heavy, black iron plates of her nose into a head-on, mighty Caribbean swell, the light from Toro ever twinkling fainter behind her, Manzanilla point a vast, towering shadow off her starboard beam. She had been delayed in sailing, owing to the special train that carried that august lady, Mrs. van Zandt, being very late indeed, and so night had set in, with a heavy breeze—dear, buffeting, old Trades!—sweeping in from the old Spanish Main, always in our hearts as the adventure chest of the open sea, making the liner pitch in long, crooked

sweeps through the salty white-caps, from stem to stern. Her red and green lights twinkled out to the tropic night, and the stars twinkled back at them from overhead.

On the promenade deck, their steamer chairs fitted snugly in between the white superstructure of the smoking room, and the two great, rakishly slanting, black funnels with their broad white band near the top, with the black P on them, sat Archie, Billy snuggled cozily against him on one arm of his chair, Tom, his entire throat carefully bandaged, lying almost flat in his deck chair close to him, too, his brown, freckled face still pale, but a wide, friendly grin of contented drowsiness on his mouth as he looked out a little sleepily to sea, Archie's big hand resting quietly over his boy's tough, young paw as it rested on the chair arm opposite to the one on which Billy sat. On the same side as Billy, in another deck chair, was Don, sprawled out very comfortably, and squatting on the side of the big, ground-glass topped hatch that acted as skylight to the engine-room far below decks, was Pat Dean.

“Ho! *You* won’t have any trouble, Donny,” Pat was saying, swinging his body in time to the heaving pitch of the liner, “’cause the American Minister patched the whole bally thing up perfectly rippin’, and cabled all about you to your Navy Department, and so they won’t do a thing but be jolly glad to have you back at Annapolis, even if you have been absent without leave. Goodness knows it wasn’t your fault, what! And I say! *Our* Minister, Sir Claude Mallet, you know, cabled our Ambassador at Washington all about you, too, and, I say! his cable got there first!”

“Roar on, oh British Lion!” the Midshipman grinned. “I don’t mind one little bit. Honest! Don’t believe, though, that I’ll be tickled silly if the Department stations me on the Canal Zone, once I get my commission. I—I’m not so awfully crazy about the Isthmus, somehow! How about you, sir?” to Archie.

“Why, Don,” that young man smiled, one hand still resting above Tom’s, one arm still thrown in careless affection about

the small Commodore's supple, little body, "you'll be surprised, I know, but do you know I'm thinking a whole lot about coming back to Panama year after next, after I get my degree? And old Tommy, here, he says so, too. 'Course I wouldn't come here, or anywhere else, without my buddy. We had some dandy talks with your engineering friends, Brown and Drake, while Tom and I were laid up in Ancon Hospital. And those two boys love the place, and the work, and the life such a lot that they make other fellows love it, too, along with them. They believe in the work, heart and soul, and, well! Reckon Tom and I believe in it, too. And then, who'll ever forget that Bayard of the Canal Zone, Don, *sans peur et sans reproche*, Gorgas, I mean. Don, he's—he's a mixture, just a wonderfully glorious mixture, of Lord Chesterfield, and Great Heart, out of *Pilgrim's Progress*. No fellow with any of the right stuff in him, can help loving a man like that, and wanting to be near him, and work his hands off for him if necessary. He saw Tom and me two and three times a day, sometimes, all the

time we were at Ancon, even though, as Chief Sanitary Officer, his time is filled up almost to the breaking point. Why, even young Brown admits that it is Gorgas and his crowd that will make the canal digging possible for America, where France failed. And he said there'd be room for me. I'm poor as the dickens, you know—clothes to the contrary. Of course, as this hard boiled, old Commodore's A. D. C., I had to dress the part, but if you'd see me at Oxford 'long with the other Rhodes Scholarship chaps, you'd see a mighty different looking fellow, and a mighty different wardrobe. When the kid, here, was pretty sick and miserable, the Colonel was mighty good to him. I won't forget his face as he bowed that graciously handsome, silvered head of his over Tom's cot, and laid his hand on the dear, old husky's hair, and told him, with that gentle laugh of his, just for all the world as if Tom and I had been his boys—and he really felt that way, too, for there's not one ounce of bluff about Colonel Gorgas—that fellows who'd been through what we had, should be able to snap their fingers at yellow

fever mosquitoes, and that he'd remember the pair of us, whether we forgot him, or not. As if any fellow could forget the Colonel! Gee! D'you suppose the Round Table ever forget their Arthur, or those same Knights of the Holy Grail, their Galahad?"

There was a long pause, the stars swinging low on the horizon as they do in the tropics, the phosphorous dancing its unearthly, Will-o'-the-wisp lights over the long swells of the Caribbean, the fire in the bowl of Archie's short, "bull-dog" pipe glowing cozily.

"Heigh-ho!" that young husky yawned at last: "Its 'most eight o'clock, I bet! They surely did get the old 'Colon' out of her berth good and late! Gosh! 'How time do fly,' as the little girl said; that is, when a fellow's comfortable, and knows that his kids are all safe! Feeling better, Tom?"

"I'm feelin' great, Archie!" the once-upon-a-time pirate boy answered happily, smiling up from his cushions. "Hul-ly Gee! Guess I've got a right to feel good, haven't I? Huh? Why, fellow, I'm goin' *home*! We're all of us goin' home! An'

I'll have a real, sure 'nough home now, you bet! You said I could stay with you after you'd turned our Commodore over to his folks; an' I can, can't I, Archie? "

" You bet you can! Didn't I say we'd always stick together, you and I, that time over in the bungalow among the poinsettias? And we'll always live 'happy ever after,' and be 'awfully good pals,' like Patsie, here, and Ezabelita."

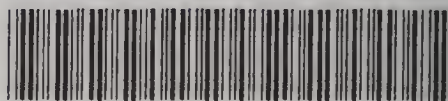
" Sure, Archie! " from Tom. " An' me an you'll help each other do that job we've talked about such a lot since we've been in sick bay, at Ancon, won't we? *You* know! Findin' that red headed kid—Wes' Blain. They—they marked him—Alf told me—with that—that black cross, but that 'most usually meant keepin' a fellow safe for some future use, not killin' him, only it meant, too, that the Tong was to strangle him if he ever did try for a getaway. Wes' was so awful scared of Kum-Sing, though, that I don't believe he'd ever try to run off. An'—an' he wouldn't get far, if he did try. An', Gee! I sure hope Wes' didn't try! He'd never make it. He wasn't

husky, like me, Archie. Sort of tough, all right, but real lean, an' he was short, too, for sixteen, and he used to play out awful quick, I remember. But I sort of think we'll find him, don't you, Archie? "

" We'll try to find him all right, Tom," Archie assented heartily. " And I cannot help believing that we will, too, and—Hul-lo! Listen to that, fellows! It's the first time in ages that I've heard that sound without jumping out of my skin! Fact! " And he smiled a little grimly as over the great, tumbling swells of the old Caribbean came the familiar sound—Eight Bells!

THE END

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